

# **Building Stability in Africa: Challenges for the New Millennium**

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Jakkie Cilliers, Institute for Security Studies and Annika Hilding-Norberg,  
National Defence College, Sweden

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Foreign Affairs, Sweden

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Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency

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Studies, King's College, London

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# Introduction

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## *Jakkie Cilliers and Annika Hilding-Norberg*

The first session in an international series of workshops and conferences on the theme *Challenges of peacekeeping and peace support: Into the 21st century* was held in Stockholm at the National Defence College (NDC) in September 1997. The objective of the workshop was to engage an international group of experts in exploring and expressing more effective and legitimate ways of dealing with regional conflicts, bearing in mind the importance of satisfactory civil-military relations, limited resources and the complexities related to the integration of diverse national approaches to peacekeeping and peace support activities. The workshop also sought to promote and facilitate increased co-operation and co-ordination between influential agencies and institutions from a wide variety of nations and cultures focused on seeking creative and proactive solutions to the challenges of peace support operations.

Subsequent to the meeting in Stockholm, meetings were hosted at the Russian Public Policy Centre (Moscow, March 1998), the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy (Amman, October 1998) and the Institute for Security Studies (Pretoria, November 1999). The fifth conference in the project is scheduled to be hosted by the US Army Peacekeeping Institute in May 2000. The project will also one final conference, probably in Asia and South America in 2000, before concluding at the United Nations headquarters in 2001. These organisations have been reinforced by associate partners and funders, ranging from the Swedish, Jordanian and Norwegian governments, to the L B Pearson Canadian International Peacekeeping Training Centre, United Services Institution of India, NATO Information and Liaison Office, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the Hanns Seidel Foundation. The project is co-ordinated at the NDC by Ms Annika Hilding-Norberg, the Project Director and Co-ordinator of the Department for Strategic Studies, which is headed by Professor Bo Hult.

There are a number of features that distinguish this project from other workshops and conferences addressing peacekeeping and peace support:

- The project 'ownership' — different from mere participation — is multicultural, multinational, multiregional, multidisciplinary and multireligious. The Challenges Project is co-ordinated at the NDC, but consists of a 'coalition of the willing'. Organisations from the Middle East, Eurasia, Europe, Africa, North America and Asia are already engaged and actively involved in the project.
- The project aims to present a concluding report to the Secretary-General and the governments of member states of the United Nations in 2001. The concluding report will focus on issues discussed throughout the series and will seek to recommend remedies for problems in peacekeeping and peace support, and suggest their implementation at international and national levels. The report will include the theoretical themes addressed by the project; complexities stemming from civil-military relations; the role of regional arrangements and agencies in peace support missions; the changing concept of security; preventive diplomacy; confidence-building measures; post-conflict peacebuilding; mine prevention; peace support; and international law. Further issues include doctrinal developments; the use of force; and the impact of the media, information technology and technological developments on peace support operations.
- The project combines the theoretical challenges of peacekeeping and peace support with practical problems and possibilities for education and training. For example, directors of four national peacekeeping institutes and training centres participated in Amman. The programme have included visits to national peacekeeping academies, a police academy and a minefield.

- The project promotes and encourages bilateral and multilateral exchanges between influential organisations and individuals that normally do not interact on a regular basis. A faculty exchange between the Jordan Armed Forces Peacekeeping Academy, the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy and the L B Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre was agreed to as a result of the Amman conference. Discussions dealing with the establishment of a Regional and Joint Peacekeeping Training Centre in Jordan with diplomatic, army and police components also resulted from the Amman meeting. The government of Sweden decided to become one of the funders of the Africa Early Warning Programme at the Institute for Security Studies in South Africa following the Moscow conference. Exchanges between the Swedish and Russian peacekeeping training academies were explored and agreed to as another consequence of the Moscow conference.
- Finally, conference papers and the concluding report will be published in several languages to increase the pool of peacekeeping literature in languages other than English.

This monograph contains most of the papers presented at the conference on *Building stability in Africa: The challenge for the next millennium* that was organised by the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria, South Africa, from 22 to 24 November 1999. The conference sought to place the focus of discussions on the challenges facing Africa in the 21st century. The result was a rich discussion of the nature of African conflicts, trends in peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, regional capacity-building, comparative perspectives, doctrine and related subjects.

The Institute for Security Studies is an independent applied policy research institute that seeks to conceptualise the debate on human security in Africa. The Institute has offices in Pretoria and Cape Town and conducts research projects across the African continent in areas such as corruption and governance, crime, policing, arms management, early warning, peacekeeping, regional security, defence, justice, and civil-military relations. For more information on the Institute, visit the website at <[www.issafrica.org](http://www.issafrica.org)>. Dr Jakkie Cilliers is the Executive Director of the Institute for Security Studies.

Ms Annika Hilding-Norberg is the Project Director and Co-ordinator of the 'Challenges of peacekeeping and peace support' project. She may be contacted at the Department for Strategic Studies, National Defence College, Box 27805, 115 93 Stockholm; Tel: +46 8 788 9391; Fax: +46 8 788 9499; <[annika.hilding.norberg@fhs.mil.se](mailto:annika.hilding.norberg@fhs.mil.se)>.

The organisers would like to express their gratitude to the Swedish National Defence College and the government of Sweden for funding the conference, and the Hanns Seidel Foundation for funding this publication.

# Stability for Development:

## The Challenge for Africa

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*Håkan Malmqvist, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden*

### INTRODUCTION

Africa faces many challenges in the years ahead. Western Sahara, Ethiopia-Eritrea, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi and Angola will most likely all be part of the list of countries attracting the attention of international conflict management practitioners over the next few years. When contemplating these challenges, a number of questions come to mind:

- Is international peacekeeping becoming a too costly and reactive business that is part of the past and is increasingly being abandoned by troop contributors?
- Could more be done to prevent the outbreak of violent conflicts, thereby saving lives, suffering and money?
- Is the United Nations Security Council about to lose the authority it regained during the last decade, due to the inability to act in cases like Iraq and Kosovo?
- Should the international community, in general, and the permanent members of the Security Council, in particular, engage at all in missions where they do not consider their own interests to be at stake, where there are high risks and where there is no peace to keep?
- Are the ongoing initiatives to build a regional African peacekeeping capacity addressing the real problem at hand, or just contributing to a *de facto* double standard?
- Should more resources rather be used to assist in nationbuilding by developing democratic institutions, the rule of law and respect for human rights, hoping that through the provision of domestic security, future violent conflicts will also be prevented?

Perhaps one of the most difficult challenges at the turn of the century is the need to redefine the concept of 'international peace and security'. What is considered to be domestic concerns from the outset — politically, economically socially or environmentally — may have considerable regional and international impact, also from a security point of view. Among the key areas that the UN and its member states have to address, are the questions of intervention, especially the role of the UN Security Council, the need for early action and prevention, and the promotion of human rights.

Ten years ago when the Berlin Wall was finally torn down, a whole world welcomed the new opportunities for international peace support. Without the bipolar struggle for power and influence, which often led to a policy of blocking decisions on international action in conflict areas, great expectations arose for a new and more efficient role for the UN in this area. Perhaps most of those concerned at the time overlooked the fact that new types of threats and risks to peace and security

constituted the other side of the coin.

The end of the Cold War gradually made it possible for democracy to make new conquests, but it also caused former satellite states and new-born democracies to erupt into conflict and civil wars. The long awaited freedom and accumulated needs for civil rights, as well as for new goods and services, brought about expectations of immediate results and put tremendous pressures on the political leadership of these nations.

Sources of conflict — economic, ethnic and religious — that were suppressed for a long time, but not always forgotten, suddenly surfaced and had free scope. They were sometimes severely exploited by unscrupulous political leaders and factions fighting for power. A reign of terror against civilians and, ultimately, the complete breakdown of states have too often been the results.

The borderline between civil wars and international conflicts is often very thin. One example will suffice: when the people of Rwanda became victims of genocide, vast refugee flows into neighbouring countries were produced. Refugees and soldiers resided in the same camps, offensives were carried out across the border and the conflict became regionalised.

Peacekeeping in its traditional sense has become a well-known science. With the consent of the parties, an international military presence to monitor borders, cease-fires and demilitarised buffer-zones was the standard recipe that quite often served its purpose. Over the years, the realisation grew that the same cure cannot continue to be prescribed for new kinds of diseases. During the last decade, new lessons about the complexity of peace support were learned — and much remain to be discovered. If member states of the UN aspire to act in accordance with the UN Charter when international peace and security are threatened, a significant effort will be required.

## WHAT IS THE NATURE OF CURRENT CONFLICT?

It is clear that the nature of these new types of conflict has to be explored. The legal framework for international engagement in conflict areas must be discussed. What may start as a so-called internal conflict can easily spread across borders and jeopardise the stability of a whole region. A widened concept of security — human security — has gradually become accepted, meaning that the security of people and individuals — not only of nation-states — is positioned at the forefront of international concern. It must be acknowledged that different kinds of conflicts require different kind of responses. The international instruments at hand — sometimes referred to as a 'toolbox' — must therefore be further developed. The root causes of conflict should be considered in-depth, while still continuing to enhance the capability to address the symptoms.

A broader approach has to be adopted in developing the concept of international peace support. Many improvements have been made both at the global and regional level, but perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on finetuning the traditional means of peacekeeping. Instead of focusing on the causes of conflicts, and the complex issue of supporting democratic values and institution-building in order to prevent tensions leading to violent conflicts, the inclination is to improve further what is already working fairly well.

This does not mean that the international community should be totally content with the instruments presently available for acute crisis management. The point has been reached in international politics where it is apparent that crisis management cannot be an area separated from long-term economic, social and democratic development.

A number of violent conflicts figure prominently at present on the international agenda, all tragic in their consequences, while at the same time very different from each other in background and future prospects of reconciliation. East Timor, Kosovo, Bosnia, Georgia, the DRC, Sudan, Colombia, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka could be mentioned to exemplify a few unresolved conflicts that — at least at the outset — were considered to be internal conflicts.

Interstate tensions — Ethiopia-Eritrea, India-Pakistan, and others — underline the need for improving the total arsenal of instruments for peace support in its widest sense.

## CONCEPTS OF PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION IN THE LIGHT OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE UN

It should always be underlined that the main responsibility for conflict resolution rests with the parties to a dispute and the national leaders. International law makes every state responsible for its international behaviour. States should also be expected to account for their internal actions. They often have major external consequences. Sovereignty should stand for responsibility and accountability. Lasting peace cannot be imposed. Reconciliation must grow from within.

But when a stage of intervention is reached, only the UN can give the necessary legitimacy. The alternative to a UN-based intervention may well be anarchy and indeed lead to a situation where smaller states are left at the whim of larger ones acting unilaterally or in circles of mutual interest. The Secretary-General has tried to formulate the future direction with regard to human security. Sweden's thoughts coincide with those of the Secretary-General. The best possible prevention is to ensure a life of dignity for people. The eradication of poverty, relief of the debt burden, and the promotion of democracy are all essential measures in this regard.

In other words, the international community must improve its ability to address the root causes of conflict, optimally leading to the point where a violent conflict will never arise. This, in turn, is one of the key problems with preventive measures. They seldom make the headlines, they may rarely be visible and the causal connection between preventive measures and the absence of a conflict will not always be evident.

There is a clear trend currently for national sovereignty to be questioned as an absolute principle, and at the same time, the notion of human security is gaining ground as a basis for international intervention. In short, the balance between the principle of non-intervention, the right to self-determination and the promotion of human rights is shifting, a trend that has to be developed further. A culture of prevention should be promoted and the whole ladder of prevention, provided for in the UN Charter, should be considered and used whenever necessary.

Secretary-General Annan devoted much of his opening speech at the General Assembly in 1999 to the issue of state sovereignty, humanitarian intervention and prevention. He called attention to the fact that state sovereignty, in its most basic sense, is being redefined by the forces of globalisation and international co-operation. He points to the dilemma of the concept 'humanitarian intervention': on one side, the question of the legitimacy of an action taken by a regional institution without a UN mandate; on the other, the universally recognised imperative of halting gross and systematic violations of human rights with grave humanitarian consequences. He draws the conclusion that the core challenge to the Security Council and the UN as a whole in the next century will be to forge unity behind the principle that massive and systematic violations of human rights — wherever they occur — should not be allowed.

The absence of armed conflict does not equal lasting peace. Given the complex deliberations preceding the deployment of a multifunctional peace support mission, given the enormous costs of keeping huge forces for long periods of time, given the occasional lack of political will to commit resources — it is long overdue for the international community to try harder and more systematically to prevent violent conflicts. Like in the case of the heart-surgeon and the nutritionist, the money and attention are directed at the more spectacular field of work. But prevention is not only a method or technique, it is a policy choice with long-term implications.

The very essence of humanitarian action is prevention. It starts with preventing inhuman living conditions and includes measures, even during the course of a violent conflict, to prevent assaults on civilians, disproportionate violence, the brutal conduct of war, displacement, and more. In the latter context, two modalities of prevention are identified in UN Security Council Resolution 46/182, notably 'temporary relief corridors' and 'days or zones of tranquillity'. These concepts serve preventive purposes and help to minimise human suffering. There is a need to continue to develop thinking on aspects of what can be termed 'creating human space in a conflict situation'.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Declaring safety zones, without the consent of the parties involved, can have dire consequences. The lessons from Srebrenica are chilling. During October 1999, a report of the Secretary-General on the events of Srebrenica was released. It is an interesting and highly self-critical assessment from which the following conclusions in the section from entitled 'Lessons for the future', have to be highlighted:

*"There are occasions when Member States cannot achieve consensus on a particular response to active military conflicts, or do not have the will to pursue what many might consider to be an appropriate course of action. The first of the general lessons is that when peacekeeping operations are used as a substitute for such political consensus, they will likely fail ... But peacekeeping and war fighting are distinct activities which should not be mixed. Peacekeepers must never again be deployed into an environment in which there is no cease-fire or peace agreement. Peacekeepers must never again be told that they must use their peacekeeping tools — lightly armed soldiers in scattered positions — to impose the ill-defined wishes of the international community on one or another of the belligerents by military means. If the necessary resources are not provided — and the necessary political and moral judgements are not made — the job simply cannot be done."*

One key challenge must be further efforts in preventive humanitarian diplomacy. There is a dilemma, however. On the one hand, it is imperative to put an end, at the earliest possible stage, to gross and massive human rights violations and other emergencies entailing grave humanitarian consequences. On the other, the integrity of the UN Charter must be safeguarded and the primary responsibility of the UN Security Council for international peace and security must be upheld.

This dilemma can only be avoided if the Security Council fulfils its role and deals effectively with upcoming crises. The earlier the council acts, the greater the chances that peaceful and less intruding measures will suffice. In Chapter VI, article 33 of the UN Charter, it is stated that *"the parties to any dispute ... shall first of all seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice."* Further up the ladder are measures such as targeted sanctions or preventive deployment of observers or troops.

Upholding the credibility of the Security Council is in the interest not only of the members of the Security Council, but also of the UN membership at large. Thus, all efforts should be made to use the Security Council as a forum for negotiations in order to avoid unnecessary threats of or the actual use of the veto, on the one hand, and unilateral action, on the other. There is no better alternative than the UN in preventing and, if needed, managing conflicts. But the UN alone cannot meet the needs and demands in this area. The co-operation between the UN and regional organisations has to be developed further.

Various actors need to interact and improve their respective capabilities to contribute to international peace and security. The UN Charter clearly recognises this potential and there are several examples of successful co-operation. However, it is important that the UN does not abdicate its primary responsibility in this area. Regional or subregional organisations or coalitions of the willing could all do a great job. At the same time, they may be regarded with scepticism by the belligerent parties if participating nations are perceived to be acting out of self-interest under the cover of regional peacekeeping.

Co-operation with regional actors is crucial, but complex, in today's growing grey zone of conflicts — domestic in origin, but international in impact. They often involve neighbouring countries as recipients of refugees, weapons suppliers or even participants. In such situations, the UN must find a way of engaging regional actors in peaceful solutions which guarantee the legitimate security interests of all. When regional leadership is available, the role of the UN should be one of providing support and, when international military peace operations are needed, to authorise and monitor.

However, when regional leadership is lacking or sometimes inappropriate, the UN must be ready to lead. Experience also shows that the management of conflicts that are out of hand must be returned to the UN for eventual resolution.

## THE AUTHORITY OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

If the authority of the UN Security Council is considered, it must be acknowledged that Kosovo, Iraq and the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) represent three situations where the credibility of the Security Council has been seriously questioned. For those who put their trust in the UN as the ultimate guarantor of the maintenance of peace and human dignity, and believe that the Council must carry out its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, this debate is a very serious one. It is surely realised that the Security Council may not be able to resolve all conflicts. But as members of the UN and as human beings, there is reason to expect that the Security Council, at all times, will manifest a serious effort to stop human suffering, resulting from threats to peace, no matter where they occur. As stated earlier, Security Council action does not necessarily mean the use of force.

The Security Council should be more transparent and open. This would contribute to the acceptance and legitimacy of its decisions. It should be able to hear the views of all relevant parties to a conflict without the implication of a political recognition. The involvement of humanitarian institutions in the Council's deliberations would enhance the quality of its decisions. The humanitarian consequences of Security Council action should always be taken into consideration. This is particularly important when sanctions are imposed.

The most obvious alternative to the use of force is conflict prevention and early action. In fact, an intervention could be seen as a confirmation of failure of prevention. Member states, in particular the permanent members of the Security Council, must share information on conflict situations and early warning signals with the Secretariat. The Secretary-General should be invited to propose appropriate and timely action to the Security Council.

Early fact-finding missions to areas of potential conflict could help the Secretary-General to formulate such proposals. Academic institutions and non-governmental organisations could also be helpful in this regard. The Security Council should hold consultations on a regular basis on various regional situations. It should identify potential conflicts and possible measures to prevent them from erupting into violence. Good offices or the appointment of special representatives are concrete examples of such measures.

## THE SWEDISH PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The Swedish government has adopted a programme of action to facilitate and contribute to the prevention of armed conflict. It is hoped that this action plan will stimulate a debate on how to change the focus from crisis management to early preventive action — in other words, to promote a culture of prevention.

The horrifying examples of human and material disaster in recent years — in Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia and East Timor — are clear examples of the failure to take preventive measures to avoid violent conflicts. It cannot be claimed that the signs were unclear, or that early warnings could not be heard, that those issues and occurrences that ultimately led to mass killings and mental trauma for both victims and perpetrators passed by unseen. The fact that the international community did not find the ways and means to act in time should be deplored. There were evidently no political mechanisms and instruments available for early action to follow early warning. Or else, the political will and courage to do what was needed, were sorely lacking.

With a policy of prevention, better use can be made of institutions for international security and development. Tools could be designed for use in a manner proportional to the level of conflict. These could be applied through trade, economic assistance and political action. The focus should shift from crisis management to the provision of a quick response to early warning signals. This is a challenge that the Swedish government has accepted through its *Action plan preventing violent conflict*.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Few measures would be more important to prevent conflicts — within and between states — than the respect for human rights. Any regime violating human rights paves the way for crisis and armed conflict. The defence of human rights is a legitimate concern for the Security Council and the international community. When the rights of individuals are violated — wherever it happens — action should be taken. Still, disrespect for democracy and human rights are obvious in many parts of the world. The events in East Timor show how the will of the people can be totally ignored by armed thugs. In Kosovo, innocent civilians are attacked for belonging to a particular ethnic group.

Societies respecting human rights are more stable and peaceful. The rights laid down in the *Universal declaration of human rights* apply to all. The principle of non-discrimination is of particular and critical importance for individuals who belong to ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities or to indigenous peoples.

A powerful tool of deterrence has been the work of the tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Another important example of conflict prevention is the recent adoption of the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, a milestone in the struggle against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. It is important to send yet another clear signal that the international community is determined to close the gap of impunity.

Long-term security is closely linked to sustainable development, and the eradication of poverty. Everyone wants and needs security, sustained development, prosperity and a life of dignity for this, as well as for future generations. To achieve this, the international community must unite around common basic values, building on respect for international law and human rights, democracy and social and economic justice.

Weak and unstable government structures have to be improved. Democracies seek security in co-operation with one another rather than through deterrence. Democratic cultures must therefore be supported in order to develop civil, open and pluralistic societies. Sound institutions interfacing with an organised civil society are critical for the capacity of a state to skillfully manage change. And change is part of the development of any society.

Post-conflict reconstruction and economic rehabilitation require a balancing act between the long-term needs of development and the more short-term demands of shoring up a fragile peace process. It is a delicate task to judge when it is safe for external actors to withdraw without risking the parties sliding back into war.

Sustainable peace and prosperity cannot be established by providing only short-term intervention measures in cases of violent conflict. On the other hand, long-term international aid does not guarantee a peaceful and irreversible positive development in the recipient country. Should the focus then increasingly be on supporting peace and security or sustainable development? It is not a matter of either/or. Peace, security, democracy, human rights, social justice, humanitarian relief and sustainable development are inseparable. Development and stability are two equally important foundations of society. And through prevention, containment and the settlement of violent conflicts, the possibilities are increased to develop economies that will prosper and ordinary people will be able to lead normal lives. Both areas have to be promoted as they are mutually reinforcing in promoting and supporting the well-being of the peoples of the world.

# Development Aid, Humanitarian Assistance and Emergency Relief

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*Carin Norberg, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency*

## INTRODUCTION

In an interesting document, presented by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) — a conference held in November 1999 in Addis Ababa,<sup>1</sup> the opening paragraph states:

*"Over the last decades, the mandate of aid has been extended significantly. The end of the cold war brought about far-reaching political changes that culminated in a great rise in civil wars, especially in Africa and the former Soviet Union, as well as a willingness by the international community to promote democratic and peaceful change in those same countries. Thirty years of exploitation, poverty, dictatorship and mismanagement, however — usually with active backing from the same international community, in the name of the cold war politics — had left many places characterised by deep social division and weak governance. As a result, humanitarian assistance and development aid found themselves confronted with a great extension of their mandates, and this under increasingly difficult conditions."*<sup>2</sup>

This opening gives rise to many observations and is used as a point of departure for general comments on the role of aid in conflict situation. First of all, the definition of and trends in aid have to be considered. The general conclusions made in the DAC study will be returned to, as it is — at least for the time being — one of the few authoritative sources on *"the influences of aid in situations of violent conflicts"* as the title states. Finally, some examples of Swedish policies and practices will be provided as seen from the perspective of the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida).

## DEFINITION AND TRENDS OF AID

What is meant by the concepts 'development' and 'humanitarian assistance'? Aid, in a very general understanding of the word, means first and foremost a flow of financial resources. Within the OECD, DAC is the body that has been assigned to report on aid flows. Given the basic assumption in the 1960s of 'a resources gap' as the stumbling block for development in the poor countries of the world, it is easy to understand the importance accorded to quantities and flows of aid.

Since the mid-1980s, aid has also been strongly identified by the set of priorities and policies linked to the release of these resource flows. It is called, alternatively, conditionalities or incentives/disincentives. The best known examples are the set of conditionalities linked to the structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). One prominent feature of this process is the call for aid co-ordination, at global, as well as at country levels.

It is a common understanding among donors today that a central focus of development assistance should be to improve the general economic, political and social climate in partner countries, by supporting measures to improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of the state, as well as the emergence of a strong civil society. Conflict prevention is seen as a central development goal.

In situations of acute conflict, humanitarian assistance is extended to the victims of the conflict according to established criteria. In these situations, the importance of analysing the ways in which

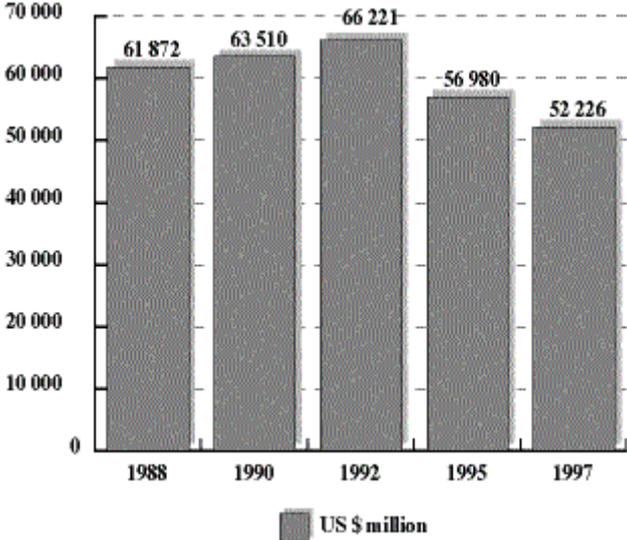
projects affect the relations between the parties involved, has become increasingly evident. By supplying resources to areas with extremely limited resources, projects can bring about or fuel existing conflicts.

The development of new aid instruments has taken place, in the wake of peace agreements or periods of non-violence. This particularly refers to post-conflict aid in support of post-conflict recovery. The objective is seldom to return to pre-crisis conditions, but to lay the foundations for peace and sustainable development.

Conflict and aid in conflict situations are not seen as static and unchanging, but rather as part of a dynamic process. The close co-operation of all policy instruments (humanitarian, diplomacy, military, trade and development co-operation) is thus required to ensure coherence and co-ordination.

Given these stated objectives, which can be found in the DAC guidelines series on *Conflict, peace and development co-operation on the threshold of the 21st century*,<sup>3</sup> aid flows and recent trends may be considered, using figures from DAC statistics<sup>4</sup> and the 1999 *World disasters report*.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1: Overseas development assistance (ODA) net disbursements in US \$ millions



Aid flows have overall begun to stagnate since the beginning of the 1990s. In relation to gross national product (GNP) a record low level of 0.22 per cent has been reached today, which is far below the target adopted by the United Nations of 0.7 per cent.<sup>6</sup> And the trend is continuing downward. The positive news is that overall flows from OECD countries have increased, as is seen in Figure 3, from 0.57 per cent in the mid-1980s to 0.86 per cent in 1997.

Figure 2: ODA as percentage of gross national product (GNP)

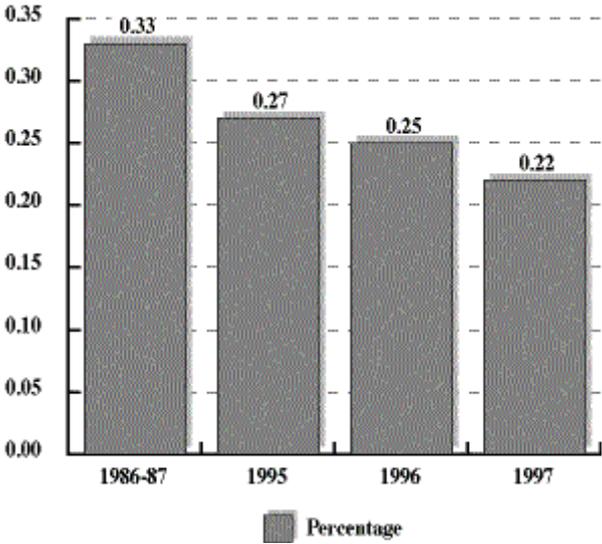
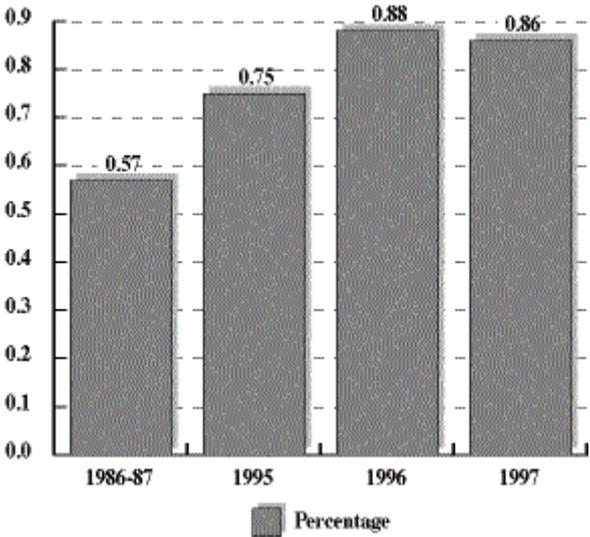


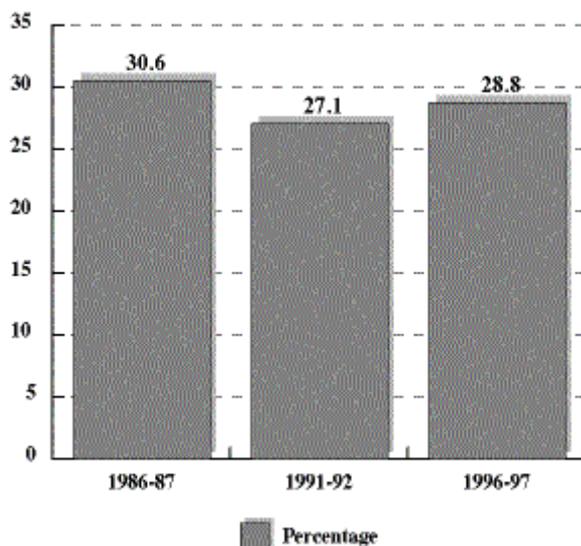
Figure 3: Total aid flows as percentage of gross national product (GNP)



But there are disturbing regional disparities. In Africa, ODA has decreased from US \$25 597 million to US \$18 529 million between 1990 and 1997, while private flows have fluctuated from negative in 1990 to a positive US \$5 876 million in 1997 (still less than in 1978).

Sub-Saharan Africa's share of the ODA is also falling, from 31 per cent in the mid-1980s to 29 per cent in 1997. Even more disturbing is that overall ODA from OECD countries to the Least Developed Countries group has decreased from 38 per cent in the mid-1980s to 31 per cent in 1997.

Figure 4: Sub-Saharan Africa's share of ODA as percentage of gross disbursements



Despite the increased emphasis on aid in conflict situations, overall aid flows are stagnating and Sub-Saharan Africa's share of ODA is declining.

There is a general assumption that development co-operation has been replaced by humanitarian assistance and/or relief assistance. While development co-operation is defined by its long-term objectives, humanitarian assistance and relief operations are seen as short-term aid which involves immediate, survival assistance to the victims of crises and violent conflicts. The general humanitarian principles constitute the framework within which aid is delivered — impartiality, neutrality, access, and parties' responsibility. The increase in the number of conflicts, especially in Africa, has also seen an increase in humanitarian aid.

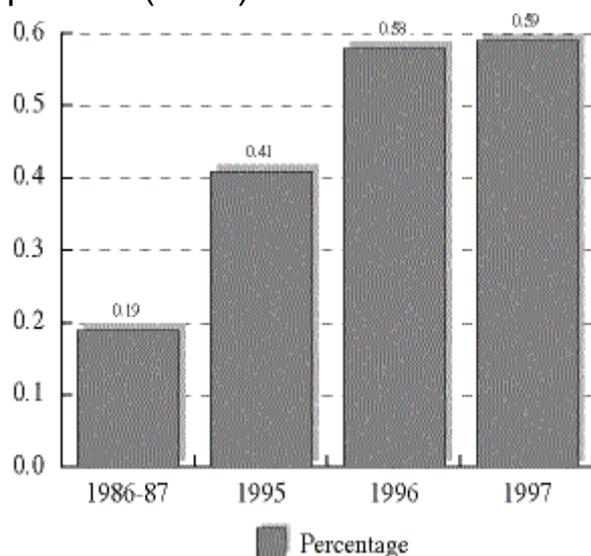
According to the 1999 *World disasters report*,<sup>2</sup> the overall non-food emergency and distress relief disbursements have increased from US \$809 million in 1989 to a record high of US \$3 468 million in 1994, but has since decreased to US \$2 163 million in 1997.

It is doubtful whether any conclusions can be drawn about humanitarian aid. It has declined, although conflicts have remained fairly constant over the last few years. A dramatic rise in natural catastrophes has also been experienced recently. How these events have affected the distribution of humanitarian aid is still unknown. The effects of the development in Kosovo during 1999 have furthermore become clear and the result of this development on the distribution of aid. A 'crowding out' effect will probably become evident which will negatively affect the humanitarian aid flow to Africa.

So far, this contribution has concentrated on official resource flows. But as has been shown, there is a sharp increase in private flows, at least in parts of the world. Private flows are not the main theme of this article. Nevertheless, some general reflections on the importance of the private sector relative to the public sector in resource flows to conflict-ridden areas of the world and, in particular, in Africa, are important.

The importance of natural resources as a source of income for actors in conflict has been substantiated in many research projects and articles. William Reno has studied the connections between the diamond trade and conflict in Sierra Leone and Liberia. In a recent article by Colette Braeckman, she writes about the carve-up of the Congo, involving both governments and private companies. It calls to mind a visit to Kinshasa in September 1997. The hotel was the centre for aid discussions — bilateral, as well as multilateral — with a World Bank delegation, political discussions with a human rights group appointed by the UN Secretary-General, and business dealings with people from all over the world, including Sweden and South Africa. It can be surmised that the latter had more impact on the conflict than the former.

Figure 5: Net flow of private capital as percentage of gross national product (GNP)



Arms exports to Africa almost doubled during the last year, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. Around 60 per cent of the deaths from armed conflicts also occurred in sub-Saharan Africa. Eleven of the 25 civil wars that were out of control last year were in sub-Saharan Africa. Military expenditure in the region totalled nearly US \$10 billion in 1998, if military assistance and the funding of opposition groups and mercenaries are taken into account. According to the same source, spending on arms in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa, increased by 14 per cent which can be compared with an average economic growth of less than one per cent.<sup>8</sup>

These figures must be contemplated before the role of development aid and humanitarian assistance is discussed. The conclusions — or hypotheses — are that the private sector plays a much more prominent role in conflict situations than previously assumed. The importance of private flows in Africa, however, are very difficult to estimate quantitatively as they do not always appear in official statistics.

## THE INFLUENCE OF AID IN SITUATIONS OF CONFLICT

The above does not mean that development aid — or humanitarian aid — only has a minor role to play, only that there should be a greater awareness of its relative significance in terms of resources — and where they come from.

*The influence of aid in situations of conflict* is the title of an interesting DAC document, written by Peter Uvin, a research professor at the Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University.<sup>9</sup> The document is based on country studies of Afghanistan, Bosnia, Rwanda and Sri Lanka. The studies examine whether and how donors, during and after violent conflict, use their official development assistance to create incentives and disincentives to reduce conflict and promote peace.

Incentives for peace refer to all purposeful uses of aid that strengthen the dynamics that favour peace. It covers actions such as influencing actors' behaviour, by modifying their capacities, by changing relations between conflicting actors and by influencing the social and economic environment in which conflict and peace dynamics take place.

The study reveals some basic lessons about the role of aid in a strategy of incentives for peace:

- All aid, at all times, creates incentives and disincentives for peace or for war, (this means that efficiency may sometimes have to be traded for stability and peace).

- Aid alone usually has limited capacity to determine the dynamics of violent conflicts.
- The impact of ODA takes place in the broader, often volatile, environment of the relations between the country and the international community.

Promoting peace is a long-term commitment, according to the study. It requires donors to have a long-term vision.

Co-ordination among donors is another aspect discussed at length. It is observed that domestic policies and national interests in donor countries play a powerful role in determining their goals and margins for manoeuvre. Differences between headquarters and field staff are yet another complicating factor of the co-ordination dimension.

In most situations of conflict, humanitarian and development assistance co-exist for long periods of time. New intermediate instruments, such as transition aid or post-conflict recovery, have been developed to work in this grey zone. The study takes note of the ongoing debate about the extent to which humanitarian assistance should be used as part of a strategy of incentives for peace. It refers to the fear within the humanitarian aid community that this may entail a weakening of the humanitarian imperative. The study observes that there is a tendency to end emergency aid as fast as possible, in part because of this problem.

The study also highlights that humanitarian aid normally bypasses governments more than ordinary development aid. It concludes that donors face a fundamental strategic choice when engaging in an incentive for peace strategy. One strategy is based on *trust* seeking to strengthen the government's own capacity to finance and manage its own priorities. The other strategy is based on *control* seeking maximally and directly to control the use of funds.

The four country case studies suggest that conditionality is more often than not ineffective. And even if it works, it has a high political price, for it increases a climate of adversity and resentment between donors and recipients.

The study advocates alternatives to conditionality, including long-term constructive engagement, principled behaviour (bottom line) and to seek to negotiate political benchmarks with recipient governments.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF SWEDISH AID

Following the development of new conflict patterns in the world, new policies and new strategies have been developed by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and by Sida. These policies and strategies reflect new conflict situations, but are also based on the Swedish political tradition of engagement.

As a matter of historical record, it is more than thirty years since the Swedish parliament, in May 1969, endorsed a policy of direct official humanitarian assistance to the Southern African liberation movements. This policy was based on some main principles of which the significance of the UN as a global 'security umbrella' for conflict resolution was one and public legitimacy was another.

In the late 1990s, Swedish aid policy is again subject to parliamentary review. The purpose is, among others, to assess the consequences of globalisation and to update the general aid policy. Peace and conflict resolution have been mentioned as areas of particular concern.

In 1998, Sida developed a strategy for conflict management and peacebuilding that was adopted by the Swedish government in January 1999. The strategy was accompanied by a policy paper on *Humanitarian assistance in armed conflicts with a children's rights perspective*. In addition to these two documents, Sida also developed a so-called 'concept paper' on *Developmental humanitarian assistance* in 1998.<sup>10</sup> These papers and Sida's action plan on democracy, human rights and conflict management — *Justice and peace* — include the main guidelines for the Agency's activities in conflict management within development and humanitarian assistance.<sup>11</sup>

At the *macro-level*, Swedish development assistance to main partner countries is guided by country strategies. In all its country strategies — and similar documents — Sida analyses the risk of ongoing conflicts and gives priority to projects/programmes and working methods which reduce conflicts in society and prevent armed conflict. The underlying assumption is that programmes of development co-operation can contribute to the prevention of armed conflicts 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.

The regional dimension and the need for conflict analysis are aspects of the development co-operation which have been given additional attention. To this effect, Sida has established links with academic institutions in Sweden and abroad. Sida has contributed to the WIDER research project on *Social and economic consequences of complex emergencies* and to the Queen Elizabeth House project on *Social and economic costs of conflict*. Sida has also initiated close co-operation with the Peace and Conflict Research Department of Uppsala University and with the Conflict and Development Department (Padrigu) of Gothenburg University. Presently, Padrigu is involved in conflict analysis in Angola, part of which is done in close co-operation with Angolan academics.

At the *mezzo* and *micro-levels*, Sida is at present reviewing methodology and instruments to enhance conflict analysis. It is believed that, with a rights-based approach, Sida would be in a position to promote forces in society conducive to peace. But, and this need to be repeated from time to time, aid alone cannot make the difference.

In the action plan, *peace and justice* — a dichotomy of institutional dimensions *vis-à-vis* cultural dimensions and state *vis-à-vis* civil society — is used as the main analytical tool. The institutions of democracy need to be the expression of a democratic culture, and vice versa. In the analysis of a given country, an attempt is made to identify the role of development co-operation in relation to the tasks of the state, as well as those of the civil society

The *Strategy for conflict management and peacebuilding* was developed within the framework of *humanitarian assistance*. In the strategy, conflict management is used as a generic term for aid financed projects implemented during ongoing armed conflicts. Conflict prevention is used for interventions that have as their main objective the prevention of the outbreak of violence, the escalation of violence, or the return to violence.

The strategy makes a distinction between the victims of conflicts and the actors or parties to a conflict. In the first case, humanitarian principles apply with the focus on saving and protecting human lives and mitigating the effects of armed conflicts. In the second category, projects are designed with the aim of influencing the parties involved. The strategy identifies the promotion of dialogue and the promotion of security as two distinct areas of activities.

The first category includes:

- projects to influence the culture of violence;
- research, education, seminars and mediation at local level;
- projects for increasing awareness; and
- conflict analysis.

The second category includes:

- a preventive presence (civil peace monitoring, observer functions, and so on);
- demilitarisation, disarming, reintegration and control of arm flows; and
- reform of the security sector, such as the establishment of an army and a police force under democratic control.

The privatisation of the security sector is a recent phenomenon which needs to be considered.

Swedish humanitarian assistance has a fairly broad mandate when compared internationally. The aim is to work in an integrated manner in order to avoid gaps between humanitarian and development mandates. To this end, a policy on *Developmental humanitarian assistance* has been developed. This means that, in acute conflict situations, the focus is on promoting solutions that have a long-term perspective and are accepted and supported locally.

Some practical examples of projects supported through Swedish assistance include the following:

- Sida supports a number of international organisations which, through their work in forming opinions, increase the general awareness in cases of armed conflict. One such an organisation is the Swedish Life and Peace Institute working with processes of reconciliation at the local level in Somalia. The guiding principle is a 'bottom-up' approach. The capacities of local communities are strengthened. Councils of elders and women's groups have been engaged in reconciliation conferences. Civic education is an important part of the programme.
- In Uganda, Sida is in the process of formulating a long-term development programme in the field of human rights and democracy. A study has been commissioned that includes researchers from Sweden and Uganda. The result, a report entitled *Peace, democracy and human rights in Uganda: A string of fragile pearls*, was recently discussed in Uganda with academics, government officials and civil society representatives. The discussions and the final report will constitute the basis for formulating a programme for Swedish support.[12](#)
- During the 1990s, Sida supported three regional human rights organisations in Banjul: the African Commission for Human and People's Rights, the African Centre for Studies on Democracy and Human Rights, and the African Society of International and Comparative Law. The support was managed by the Swedish Raoul Wallenberg Institute.

These examples are chosen because they represent an approach that donors need to address: locally based projects in a regional context and focused on national priorities.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, these dimensions, in concert with a long-term and consistent commitment, are the most important contributions to a peaceful world that would result from greater development co-operation.

The international community — the donor community — also needs to sustain and increase the volume of official development assistance in order to reverse the growing marginalisation of the poor. The success or failure of poor people and poor countries will have a profound influence in shaping the 21st century, to quote from the DAC policy document adopted by all OECD development ministers in 1996.

Finally, 50 per cent — or more — of those affected by conflict are children. It is therefore of the utmost importance that those who work with the peace process, such as those engaged in reconstruction and long-term development, should first and foremost think — children!

## Endnotes

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# Africa and the Challenges of Security Sector Reform

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*Rocklyn Williams, Institute for Security Studies*

## SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AND THE ORIGIN OF A CONCEPT

A major shift in the thinking of bilateral donor organisations, international financial institutions and development agencies is beginning to occur around the issue of security sector reform. Traditionally donor organisations and countries tended to treat security sector issues in one of two ways. Firstly, they saw security sector restructuring and assistance as being the preserve of either their foreign ministries or, more appropriately, their respective defence establishments. Secondly, when considering issues of a security nature, they tended to adopt a zero-sum approach to military expenditure. This rather simplistic line of logic (best exemplified in the structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank over the past two decades) maintains that a reduction in military expenditure (miles) is both a 'good thing' in itself and, once effected, releases valuable resources for the ongoing development of the country concerned.

The reality, of course, is infinitely more nuanced than such mechanistic equations would suggest. There is no *necessary* correlation between reductions in force levels, their budgets and their respective armouries and the ongoing development of a country. Admittedly, such reductions have been accompanied by an increase in political stability on many occasions (South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia during their post-election scenarios, for instance), and a redirection of military expenditure towards tangible development goals. Yet, there are compelling examples of countries where an ill-considered security sector restructuring programme has actually bedevilled political stability and, ultimately, worsened civil-military relations. The extensive and largely successful demobilisation programme initiated in Eritrea left the country initially unprepared for the conflict with its larger neighbour. The proposed reduction in the size of the security forces has been a major contributing factor to the innumerable mutinies and several *coup d'états* that have occurred on the African continent during the past forty years (the Central African Republic in the mid-1990s, the frequent mutinies in the former Zaïre and the 1997 *coup* in Sierra Leone, for example).

The relation between security sector downsizing, on the one hand, and the attainment of political stability and development, on the other, is at best a *contingent* relationship conditioned by a host of political, economic, social and institutional factors which are utterly unique to the country concerned. It is only on the basis of a scientific and empathetic reading of these highly diverse contexts that appropriate interventions in the security sector can be made. It is towards these type of strategies that pundits of security sector reform are seeking to address themselves.

Security sector reform can best be understood against both the backdrop of traditional military assistance to developing countries, and within the context of the new alignment of political forces that is occurring within the developed countries. Military assistance during the Cold War was characterised by a number of key features:

- It was highly politicised and tended to follow the ideological contours of the period. Military assistance was provided to the extent that it extended the sphere of influence of either the United States or the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics on the African continent and was linked to support for those governments (mostly undemocratic and often with appalling human

rights records) that would be supportive of either of these blocs in the international arena and/or supportive of their interventions in the region or subregion concerned.

- The nature of the assistance focused more on the provision of technical assistance and the development of military-technological capabilities than it did on the normative and organisational restructuring of the security sector in question. Issues concerning the creation of democratic civil-military relations, enhancing legislative and executive oversight over the armed forces and developing a military professional ethos consistent with the dictates of a modern democracy were largely ignored. Assistance sought to create well-equipped, well-trained and well-resourced armed forces that could, if required, maintain the government in question in power and, if so called upon, deploy forces against political groupings deemed as subversive.
- Given the nature of this assistance — invariably bilateral agreements between the recipient country and the donor country — and the context within which it occurred — the Cold War — it was not surprising that this strategic approach was characterised by an overarching emphasis on state security as opposed to the security of individuals and of communities. Legislative reform and the restructuring of civil oversight mechanisms within the executive were often ignored, and the role of civil society (itself a term more commonly associated with the 1990s) was effectively absent from these interventions. A tradition of strong states was created (particularly among the Francophone countries) within which the security forces played a prominent and enduring role.
- No real attempt was made to broaden the field of defence endeavour to include parliamentarians, the public and even important civilian policy sectors (the foreign policy and finance sectors, for example). The management of defence became the exclusive preserve of a group of highly skilled practitioners whose interaction with non-military actors was limited and whose preparedness to divulge the workings of their institution was virtually non-existent.

The end of the Cold War, the emergence of civil society (both conceptually and practically) as a new actor in governance relations, and the increasing focus of international financial institutions, bilateral donors and development agencies on governance issues, in general, created the space within which a strategic emphasis on security sector reform began to emerge.

Initially, the tentative steps towards the inclusion of the security sector within a broader development orbit appeared to emanate from the donor initiatives of the Nordic countries and of the Netherlands. Increasingly, the restructuring of the security sector was viewed in a less parochial and ghettoised manner than had hitherto been the case. Police reform was not seen as an end in itself, but was linked to the wider terrain of criminal justice reform. Military restructuring was linked to the more holistic question of national defence management — a process that included, somewhat self-evidently, the legislature and the executive.

South Africa benefited considerably from the presence of Danish and Dutch police advisors during its protracted and often difficult transition between 1990 and 1994, and during its process of police restructuring from 1994 onwards. The Danish government funded a Southern African defence management programme centred at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, but including four other centres within the subregion. The focus of the programme was the education of both civilian officials and military officers in the principles and practice of democratic civil-military relations. The British Ministry of Defence extended the ambit of the British Military Assistance Training Team (BMATT) in South Africa to include a British Defence Advisory Training Team (BDATT) which had as its brief the rendering of assistance to the country in the creation and consolidation of its executive mechanisms of civil oversight over the armed forces (most notably the restructuring of the Ministry of Defence).

A conceptual and normative shift was evident in the contents of many of the courses being presented to African countries by foreign governments. The BMATT courses and the programmes of the US International Military Education Team (IMET) increasingly began emphasising the role of stable civil-military relations in the successful management of a country's national defence function. The IMET programmes were expanded to include hitherto marginalised actors within its training schedule —

most notably civilian defence officials, parliamentarians and, on occasion, even civil society representatives (this programme has become known as the 'expanded' IMET). The US offers an impressive array of civil-military relations programmes at its defence colleges and universities (the recently established African Centre for Security Studies and the programmes offered at the Air Force University, the National Defence University, and the Centre for Civil-Military Relations at the Naval Post-Graduate College, for instance). Notwithstanding the Eurocentric assumptions that underpin many of the curricula, these programmes possess the potential to be significantly expanded and modified in future.

It was the British government's Department for International Development (DFID) that, in March 1999, placed the issue of security sector reform boldly on the international agenda. DFID's decision to include security sector reform in its development focus was, as outlined above, the product of an incremental development in donor thinking on the relevance of security sector reform to the broader development agenda:

*"The rationale for focusing on security sector issues — as specified in DFID's policy statement — is sound, uncontroversial and widely appreciated. Recognition is growing that unprofessional or poorly regulated security forces often compound rather than mitigate security problems. Excessive security spending may also absorb scarce public resources that would be better used in other sectors contributing to poverty alleviation. Because security sector problems tend to be a symptom of broader social, political and economic challenges facing poorer societies, there is a strong argument for adopting a more holistic approach to development that incorporates security sector concerns."<sup>1</sup>*

The following characteristics differentiate security sector reform from previous donor security sector initiatives:

- It has a clear normative and practical commitment to a development agenda. The most lucid exposition of this commitment has come from the DFID in the form of its emphasis on linking security sector reform to poverty alleviation.
- Its normative content is exemplified by its commitment to contextualise security sector reform within the ambit of the consolidation of democracy, the promotion of human rights, good governance and the creation of a culture of accountability and transparency in the management of security sector processes. In this sense, it is manifestly different from the ideologically inclined and technocratic approaches of those military aid programmes that characterised most of the Cold War interventions and which still continue to dominate much of the security sector assistance provided to Africa by non-African actors.
- The preparedness of security sector reform strategies to countenance a much higher degree of local ownership of the process than has hitherto been the case is clear. Previous military aid programmes mostly saw the literal and derivative application of Western models, strategies and doctrines to the restructuring of the security forces of the developing world.

The introduction of security sector reform on the international agenda, while commendable, is not without its challenges. These challenges are basically fivefold in nature and are discussed below. The aim of this article is to outline some of the key challenges facing both the conceptualisation of security sector reform as a subdiscipline/subtheme within the broader development agenda and, more particularly, analysing some of the major challenges confronting the institution of security sector reform on the African context.

# OPERATIONALISING SECURITY SECTOR REFORM: STRATEGIC AND PRACTICAL CHALLENGES

## Indigenising the concept of security sector reform

The concept of security sector reform, despite its laudable intentions and notwithstanding the fact that it is predicated on noble normative principles, is exclusively Eurocentric in origin. This should not disqualify it, at a philosophical level, from being introduced into the political discourses of the developing world. Indeed, its normative content, emanating largely from the centre-left discourses of the Nordic countries, the European social democracies, the democratic administration in the US, the Canadian government and the new Labour government in Britain, is remarkably similar to many of the ideas being articulated by presidents Mbeki, Obasanjo and others on the African continent.

A rigorous and strategic indigenisation of the concept will be required on the African continent, however, if any semblance of local ownership is to be effected, and if any potential discrediting of the concept, from opportunistic and predictable political quarters, is to be avoided.

Practically, this will require a series of strategies to determine how security sector reform will be internalised within the political and institutional discourses of the developing world so that it is both consistent with the indigenous traditions of the African continent and is supportive of the ongoing attempts by Africans to take control of the political processes of which they are inseparable parts. This begs a series of partnerships with legitimate actors within the recipient countries to ensure that security sector reform succeeds. This challenge (constituting the major one confronting security sector reform) is analysed in more depth in the third section of this article.

## The content of security sector reform

The conceptual content of security sector reform will need to be determined. Will security sector reform focus on those issues that have traditionally occupied the Defence Ministries of donor countries — tactical training, doctrinal development, officer and non-commissioned officer development, equipment and weapons systems familiarisation, and organisational restructuring, for example? Alternatively, will it focus on metalevel processes such as the national decision-making process and the role of the armed forces within this process, or the inculcation of the normative principles of civil-military relations within the officer corps of developing countries?

Failure to determine the depth and the width of the conceptual content could lead to the underutilisation of a series of interventions that are redolent with strategic potential. It could also lead, more practically, to considerable interagency infighting within the donor community (particularly with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) and interdepartmental friction within the national government of the donor country itself over what it is that security sector reform denotes.

## Security sector reform and development: Ensuring an holistic and integrated agenda

The conceptual linkages between security sector reform and other strategic interventions being made by the donor community will need to be assessed. How, for instance, does security sector reform link into the higher level strategies of peacebuilding, good governance and the consolidation of democracy? These appear to be, at a superficial level, at least, relatively uncontested linkages but, in reality, will require a much more thorough analysis and logical interconnection than is currently the case. While not being unduly Cartesian in the approach to security sector reform, it will nevertheless be necessary to provide a conceptual and strategic 'map' of how security sector reform interconnects with the other development initiatives currently pursued by donor instances.

## What constitutes the security sector?

Proponents of security sector reform will need to determine which institutions legitimately constitute part of the security sector. Three possible options exist in this regard:

- The first is a maximalist approach that includes all institutions (whether statutory or non-statutory) that have the provision of physical security as their focus (armed forces, police, *gendarmerie*, border guards, militia and paramilitary institutions such as presidential guards); contribute to the development of conditions of national security (the intelligence services); ensure a climate of peace and stability (the criminal justice system and even, within a broadened definition of human security, those civilian government departments concerned with the provision of welfare services); and any such institution of a non-statutory nature of which the security potential and political significance merit its inclusion within the definition of the security sector (guerrilla forces, civilian defence forces and paramilitary organisations attached to particular political parties).
- The second is a minimalist approach which sees the security sector as being composed of those statutory forces that have traditionally possessed the responsibility for ensuring the physical security of the state — the armed forces, the police, paramilitary organisations and, where they exist, militia organisations.
- The third approach — the approach advocated by this article — is the pragmatic approach. This approach sees the security sector as being constituted out of the traditional statutory instruments of state-centred security — the armed forces, the police, paramilitary organisations and the intelligence services. It also includes such institutions as guerrilla forces (where such forces are eligible for eventual integration into new national security institutions and/or demobilisation), and indigenous military organisations that have played a positive role in contributing to the physical security of communities (civilian defence forces in Sierra Leone, and self-defence units in South Africa, for example)

This article advocates the adoption of the third approach for practical reasons. Practically, it provides a focus within which the immensely complex issue of security sector reform can be managed. Notwithstanding the political and social importance of human security, the 'core' components of the security sector, *qua* institutions, within the African context are the army, the police, the intelligence services, paramilitary organisations, as well as guerrilla and rebel armies. Failure to address these institutions effectively, taking into account the importance of linking them to broader security institutions (the rest of the criminal justice system) and larger development processes (reconstruction and development, the creation of a culture of good governance, and so on), could potentially jeopardise not only the stability of individual countries, but of entire subregions as well (as the military governments in both Nigeria and Sierra Leone vividly demonstrated).

## TOWARDS AN AFRICAN TRADITION OF SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

The influence of Western intellectual and political traditions over both the political and intellectual traditions of the developing countries of the periphery has been well chronicled by a range of scholars and political analysts alike. The economic dependence of African countries on their former colonial masters was replicated in the introduction of various political, educational and intellectual systems that were markedly similar in both form and content to those of the departing Western colonisers, for instance.

Both the armed forces of African countries and the patterns of civil-military relations which began to emerge during the post-colonial period mirrored this close ascriptive relationship between coloniser and colonised. Although the ethnic and racial composition of the armed forces of the newly independent countries changed significantly in the first decade following independence, their culture, traditions and corporate identity remained strongly influenced by the discourses and ideological themes of those of the Western armed forces.

The emerging patterns of post-independence civil-military relations were also marked, at the level of institutions and mechanisms, by a strong similarity between the formal mechanisms and institutions of civil control found in the metropole and those introduced in the newly independent countries. Virtually all African countries possess, on paper at least, the battery of formal mechanisms via which, it is claimed, civilian control over the armed forces is ensured — although the form of these mechanisms may vary depending on the country concerned and the politico-judicial system which they have inherited and subsequently adapted. Countries possessing a stronger legislative tradition tend to emphasise the role of those legislative mechanisms entrusted with the task of civil oversight — parliamentary committees, ombudsman systems and approval of the budget, for example. Other countries with a stronger executive culture may rely more extensively on the regulatory role of civil servants and finance ministries, and presidential control to ensure the subordination of the armed forces to civil control.

Virtually all African security institutions, in general, and armed forces, in particular, are near mirror reflections of their former colonial security institutions. The rank structure is the same with very few exceptions (one of them being the largely unsuccessful attempts by the National Party in South Africa in the 1950s to create a rank structure based on those of the original Boer commandos), the doctrine has admitted to few indigenous revisions (notwithstanding the fact that many of the new defence forces were constituted out of indigenous African guerrilla armies with their own, non-Western traditions and doctrines), their institutional culture aping that of either the British, the French or the American value system and the ideological themes that pervade their discourse are manifestly European in origin.

An analysis of the political institutions of most African countries also reveals a range of formal mechanisms designed to ensure the maintenance of stable civil-military relations that are uncannily Eurocentric in origin. Typically, these include constitutional provisions regulating the functions of the armed forces, parliamentary defence committees, public accounts committees, audit and exchequer acts, internal audits and service regulations. In some countries, fully-fledged ministries of defence and military ombudsman systems exist, while creative and varied forms of both civil and civilian oversight over the armed forces have been instituted in others.

Yet, notwithstanding this range of formal mechanisms, the salient reality underpinning African civil-military relations (and indeed the civil-military relations of most developing countries) is the fact that the subordination of the armed forces to civil control in most countries, when this has occurred, has been achieved by a complex system of processes and interfaces of a non-institutional nature. In virtually all these countries where the armed forces remain subordinate to the civil authorities (regardless of whether the latter are democratically elected or not), real control over the armed forces is wielded via a range of subjective interfaces and partnerships of which the formal mechanisms are either a component or, alternatively, are merely the formal expression of these power relations.

To give true expression to these traditions will therefore require a genuine recognition of the importance of African actors actually 'owning' these processes and of providing the necessary resources with which they can achieve the objectives that are, explicitly and implicitly, at the heart of the security sector reform discourse. Some guidelines in this regard are proposed below.

## THEORETICAL POSSIBILITIES AND REVISIONS: AFRICAN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

It was stated above that developing countries, in general, and African countries, in particular, have often tended to mediate their experiences of civil-military relations through the traditions of either their former colonisers, or, with the impact of globalisation, through their major trading partners. The resulting intellectual, ideological and doctrinal dependence produces a situation aptly described as follows:

*"As long as imported theories and cultural movements remain divorced from the opposition of forces which are the only means of lending specific importance and historical density to the signs produced in Latin American cultures, they act as little more than orthopaedic aides within the contexts of those cultures. Characteristically, this kind of production exhausts itself in mere formal repetitions or*

If African countries are to avoid the 'doctrinal mannerism' referred to here, then it is imperative that some of the key assumptions underpinning current Western concepts of security sector reform (to the extent that they are developed) should be contextualised within an African environment. A conceptual geography of security sector reform needs to be developed that is more consistent with the realities of African needs and African experiences, in general. The reification of one tradition and theoretical system to the detriment of other discourses can stifle and impede constructive intellectual debate, and can produce unintended political consequences if literally applied. A number of suggestions can be made regarding the proposed re-examination of the theoretical assumptions underpinning the future study and application of security sector reform strategies within Africa.

- The limited utility of some Western 'models' of security sector reorganisation in an African environment should not be constituted as an attack on some of those principles which are cardinal to the practice of security sector reform. The limited utility or inappropriateness of certain formal mechanisms of civil control in developing countries, for instance, does not detract from the principles upon which these mechanisms are predicated (the principle of civil supremacy and the importance of precisely defining the roles and tasks of the armed forces, for instance). The limitation of the current Western civil-military relations discourse lies in its ontological pretensions and not in the formal, epistemological status of its central concepts. The latter can be redeemed and key categories of civil-military relations can be reconstructed through a critique of their ontological status — the manner in which they are constructed in relation to a plurality of contexts and realities. A key area of research in the future will be an investigation of ways in which these mechanisms can be made more effective and, significantly, how objective mechanisms can interface with subjective mechanisms to improve the overall levels of oversight over the armed forces.
- The exploration of the hitherto neglected realm of partnerships (the subjective component) in civil-military relations does not imply an abrogation of the utility of objective mechanisms in 'traditional' civil-military relations theory. The primacy of the political and the importance of ensuring the subordination of the armed forces to elected civilian government continue within this expanded scope of civil-military relations. It is through a combination of both objective and subjective mechanisms, each developed in relation to the political and cultural peculiarities of the country concerned, that effective and context-specific civil-military relations can be developed.

At a practical level, a range of measures can be instituted to build capacity and mutual trust between the political and civilian élite and the command echelons of the armed forces. The active involvement of parliamentary representatives and non-military civilian experts in the defence policy process can contribute immensely to their understanding of both the nuances of the defence decision-making process and the peculiarities of military culture. Similarly, the exposure of the senior officer corps to the parliamentary process, the party-political process and the civilian budgeting process will sensitise them to the exigencies of political and civilian rule. Joint seminars, teambuilding exercises, active involvement by political and civilian representatives in the reservist formations of the armed forces, and joint visits to military installations are among some of the mechanisms that can be instituted in this regard. It is important to stress that such partnerships are not equal partnerships, however, and take place within the hierarchy of authority provided for by either a democratic dispensation or, where a 'traditional' liberal democratic system does not prevail, a situation where the inviolable authority of the elected civilian authority is respected (as in Uganda, for instance).

- The scope of security sector reform needs to be expanded to incorporate non-institutional actors and mechanisms, as well as a consideration of the role that police agencies, intelligence services and, in some cases, private security companies may play in either ensuring or undermining civil-military relations. In the case of the former, the South African defence transition illustrates the critical role that can be played by organs of civil society in contributing to the shaping of the mission of the armed forces and ensuring their subordination to civil control. In the case of the latter, it is instructive to note that the downsizing of armed

forces in many developing countries (a product of both budgetary constraints and interlined donor agency/IMF injunctions) has led to a corresponding increase in the size and power of the police force and the civilian intelligence agencies. Notwithstanding the emphasis on their civilianisation, and although not equipped with the organisational and logistic ability to influence civil-military relations at a national level, they do possess the capacity to influence civil-military relations at a regional and, more particularly, a local level.

Equally perturbing has been the transfer of state functions, intentionally and unintentionally, from state agencies to private security companies — a phenomenon most vividly exemplified by the influence of the South African private military company Executive Outcomes in various African conflicts, and the expansion of private security companies throughout Southern Africa generally (the latter increasingly consisting of former police and military personnel drawn from both the former guerrilla armies of the liberation movements and soldiers from the old regular forces). Ultimately, it may be more appropriate in many developing countries to speak either of civilian-military relations or even civilian-security relations rather than simply focusing on civil-military relations in the narrower institutional sense of the word.

- While it may not be possible to erect an integrated and overarching theoretical system or an axiomatic foundational basis which is capable of explaining all security sector reform scenarios, it will be possible to elucidate the central values of such a project. The normative dimension of civil-military relations theory needs to be stressed and bolstered and this should provide a lodestar for all interventions in the civil-military debate in developing countries. The basis of this normative framework emphasises the importance of democratic civil-military relations and stresses those universal moral values of transparency, accountability and the primacy of elected government within this equation.
- A new methodology is required that is capable of constituting the basis for an ongoing and active intervention in the civil-military relations debate within the developing world. It could be argued that any theoretical revision can only be effected on the basis on an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates both African and Western intellectual traditions originating from disciplines such as sociology, political science, international relations, state theory, and the critical-reflective traditions developed in schools of thought such as the Frankfurter Schule, postmodernism and elsewhere.
- Finally, the concept of the 'apolitical' soldier (popular, if somewhat misapplied, in the discourses of many developing world armed forces) needs to be re-examined. Even in democracies and countries with little experience of the intrusion of the armed forces into the political realm, the armed forces are invariably involved in politics in varying degrees. This involvement (whether of a benign or more assertive nature) inevitably results in the penetration of political themes and concepts into the discourse and, ultimately, the construction of the corporate identity of the armed forces (identities as diverse as those of the revolutionary soldier; the Western professional soldier of the US and the United Kingdom, or the 'citizen-in-uniform' of the *Bundeswehr*).

The influence of the 'political' may be manifest in an asymmetrical and differentiated manner within the practices of different armed forces depending on the peculiarities of the country concerned, but is always present at the heart of their activities. This may be reflected in the constitutional imperatives which the armed forces are expected to adhere to, the involvement of the armed forces in the parliamentary, policy and state budgeting process, the access of the armed forces to the president as commander-in-chief or, simply, the different political persuasions of the members of the armed forces.

It is not only inevitable that the armed forces will be 'political', but it is also perhaps desirable that they are so inclined. It is imperative that the armed forces of developing countries, and particularly those that are involved in the delicate task of consolidating democracy, are fully conversant with the democratic features of the system which they serve (hence the need for a robust civic education programme among its members), understand and are integrated into the government's key policy initiatives (especially when these relate to the encouragement of domestic development and stability), and are able, on a discursive and interactive basis, to interact with the elected civil authorities around a range of issues critical to their national

mandate. What is critical about this 'political' role, however, is the fact that it does not include the terrain of the party-political (and armed forces as such must always be non-partisan in orientation), that their partnership with the civil authorities is not an equal partnership, and that their involvement in the terrain of national policy (politics with a lowercase 'p' as opposed to politics with an uppercase 'P') that is clearly circumscribed and mutually acknowledged. It will be on this basis that a more fruitful debate on security sector reform in developing countries — a debate less ascriptive than many of the present theoretical assumptions — will be generated.

## CONCLUSION

The security sector reform debate is still in its embryonic stage. Considerable political, practical, conceptual and strategic work still needs to be done on security sector reform before a fully fleshed out and sufficiently flexible approach can be developed that will be easily applicable to most situations. Security sector reform represents an ideal opportunity for both donors and recipient countries to begin with the serious task of reconstructing the battered security sector within many parts of the developing world — an architecture that has been used and abused by both colonisers and post-independence governments alike. Abraham Lincoln's words are apt in this regard:

*"We can only succeed by concert ... The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise to the occasion. As our case is new so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves."*<sup>3</sup>

## Endnotes

1. D Hendrickson, *A review of security sector reform*, Working Paper 1, Centre for Defence Studies, University of London, 1999, p 9.
2. R Nelly, 'Postmodernism and periphery', in T Docherty (ed), *Postmodernism: A reader*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p 465.
3. Message to Congress, 1 December 1862.

# Towards an Integrated Doctrine for Peace Support Operations in Africa

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*Mark Malan, Institute for Security Studies*

## INTRODUCTION

The United Nations has been quite unambiguous in articulating what it can and cannot do in terms of peace support. Basically, it cannot do much beyond Chapter VI peacekeeping in the realm of military intervention. African coalitions, on the other hand, have proven themselves capable of conducting fairly sustained multinational operations that have involved some heavy combat engagements. Since 1990, African multilateral interventions have developed a momentum of their own, and they have increasingly leaned towards some type of peace enforcement, rather than regional peacekeeping operations in a benign security environment.

The principles guiding such interventions have yet to find expression in a realistic intervention doctrine, informed by practice, that goes beyond the 'right of humanitarian intervention' and the paying of lip-service to *An agenda for peace*. From an institutional and legal point of view, the issue of developing multilateral intervention doctrine is a global one. In practice, however, the problem is more pressing in some regions than in others. Africa and the Balkans, for example, have emerged as the most dangerous and challenging environments for the conduct of contemporary peace operations.

The member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have learned some serious lessons from their experiences in the Balkans, and are at an advanced stage of developing doctrine for more 'robust' interventions. On the other hand, the mainstream debate on multilateral intervention in Africa, which is shaped to a large degree by Western powers, continues to focus on the need for more 'UN-type' peacekeeping training for African soldiers. There have thus been few meaningful advances in doctrinal thinking in support of regional or coalition peace operations in Africa.

Part of the reason for this doctrinal lacuna relates to restrictions by donor countries on the use of development aid for military engagement — including the development of military doctrine for multilateral interventions. It also reflects the inherent difficulties of building consensus among the 53 member states of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) around a suitable military doctrine for peace support that goes beyond 'classic' consensual operations, for fear that it might threaten the principle of state sovereignty.

The aim of this article is to introduce the concept of 'integrated doctrine' for military interventions in support of peace processes, and briefly to outline its application to doctrinal development within the North Atlantic alliance framework. This provides the basis for comparing and mapping the progress made towards doctrinal consensus in Africa — at the continental and subregional levels. The contradictions thus revealed, will hopefully serve as something of a wake-up call for those concerned with the development of African 'peacekeeping capacity'.

## THE CONCEPT OF 'INTEGRATED DOCTRINE'

Military doctrine has a different content and emphasis at various levels of application. At the supranational level, doctrine manifests itself in various tenets of international law — the most overarching, of course, being the UN Charter itself. At a national level, doctrine is often articulated by white papers that explain broad policy guidelines from a political perspective. Operational level doctrine has a somewhat different focus. It concerns itself with the principles that govern the conduct of campaigns and major operations, and imparts understanding. At the tactical level, doctrine focuses more on instruction and training and ensures that commanders have a common foundation on which to base plans for the execution of their mission.

Among the countries of the world, there are also many different formal definitions of doctrine. For example:

- The British Army defines military doctrine as *"a formal expression of military knowledge and thought, that the Army accepts as being relevant at a given time, which covers the nature of current and future conflicts, the preparation of the Army for such conflicts and the methods of engaging in them to achieve success."*<sup>1</sup>
- According to the South African Department of Defence, *"Operational Doctrine consists of the main principles and concepts by which armed forces guide their actions in military operations in support of national objectives. Doctrine derives from, and must be consistent with, defence policy and structure."*<sup>2</sup>
- The US Army defines doctrine quite simply as *"... the statement of how America's Army intends to conduct war and operations other than war."*<sup>3</sup>

While such national military definitions of doctrine vary in form, there is a commonality with respect to their substance. At a multinational level, it is therefore not impossible to reach definitional consensus on the nature of doctrine. For example, NATO has agreed on the definition of doctrine as *"[f]undamental principles by which the military forces guide their action in support of objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgement in application."*<sup>4</sup>

However, at the global level, there is also substantial divergence with respect to doctrinal matters — a divergence rooted particularly in the Cold War division of the world into two opposing military-ideological blocs. The confrontation between the USSR and the West effectively also divided the world into two large doctrinal blocs, with less developed countries adopting either Western-style doctrines, often modeled on British or French ideas, or Soviet-style doctrines, with active Soviet involvement at all levels of their military development. Military bureaucracies are notoriously resistant to change. China, for instance, is still following a military style established in the 1950s during the period of its closest political engagement with the USSR. The Cold War doctrinal legacy therefore remains prominent in many developing countries.<sup>5</sup>

A central problem is thus posed by the remaining discrepancy between the Soviet and the Western conception of doctrine. When Russians discuss their 'military doctrine', they naturally include political principles — such as doctrinal statements about the right to intervene in the so-called 'near abroad'. This means that numerous international discussions on doctrine for multilateral military interventions in support of peace have never really taken off.

The African debate on peace support doctrine suffers from all these maladies. The colonial heritage saw a rough divide between those African militaries that espoused French doctrine and those that espoused British military doctrine. The situation was exacerbated during the Cold War, when the armed forces of many countries were infused with Russian/Chinese-style military doctrine. Indeed, there are some cases (for instance, in warlord armies) where it is not clear whether there is any military doctrine at all. On the positive side, it may be said that Africans, collectively, have some direct

experience with the military doctrine of four of the permanent five Security Council members — and that they may be uniquely positioned to unify or synthesise such thinking into a viable doctrine for multinational peace operations.

Despite the considerable obstacles involved, some see an inexorable trend towards the acceptance of a universal military doctrine for the conduct of peace operations. Christopher Lord has coined the phrase ‘integrated military doctrine’ to describe what he sees as a process through which the military doctrines of armed forces around the world are being integrated into a single global system. This, he argues, is an objective process that is happening regardless of any attempts to foster doctrinal consensus in the realm of multinational peace operations.

The immediate reason for the emergence of such a process in the early 1990s was the end of the Cold War and the bipolar world. However, Lord contends that the global process of integrating military doctrine is not driven solely by this seismic shift in world politics. The process of ‘globalisation’ is also changing the whole nature of world society. Politics, economics, medicine, law and all other public activities must adapt themselves to these changes — and military policy is no exception.

Since there is always a political and ideological component in military doctrine, Lord admits that there is no reason to suppose that the process of integration will be complete. Countries will preserve their independent military traditions, in the same way that they will preserve their political traditions and their independence and sovereignty, in general. The starting point for a deliberate process of developing integrated military doctrine must therefore be the recognition that the term ‘doctrine’ simply means different things in different countries and languages. From a theoretical perspective, the process should encourage an inclusive approach — one that does not exclude those countries embracing ‘political’ doctrinal statements from the military doctrinal debate.

Inclusiveness should be combined with the notion of seeking *minimal consensus*. The latter requires recognition of the fact that it might be impossible to reach agreement on comprehensive doctrine all at once, but that agreement on specific issues and on specific principles can still be reached. Consensus on discrete ‘doctrinal statements’ can then be built into national and multinational doctrines in an incremental fashion.

Unfortunately, emerging consensus has frequently been obscured by a preoccupation with concepts such as peacekeeping, peacebuilding, peace missions, peace operations, peace support operations, complex emergencies, humanitarian interventions, operations other than war, and many more. The ensuing pursuit of terminological clarity, though not unimportant in some respects, tends to hide the important common denominator — that all these interventions are at root the same. They all share the same essential logic: there is a conflict in progress, and this results in a military deployment that inserts a force into the conflict area. This gives these deployments a special character, since they are neither offensive nor defensive.

Each individual case of intervention may be unique, and have its own complexities. For example, there may be more than two sides to a conflict, and it may not be practical to deploy troops so that they are physically interpositioned between these parties. However, the point is that the overarching purpose of all such operations is not to participate in the conflict, but to act impartially to bring it to an end. Minimal consensus therefore already appears to exist on the fundamental purpose of multinational military intervention in support of peace processes.<sup>6</sup>

This essential logic of intervention has been agreed upon and has found doctrinal expression among the nineteen NATO member countries, in the form of a doctrine for the planning and conduct of peace support operations. Peace support operations are defined as “... *multi-functional operations conducted impartially in support of a UN/OSCE mandate ... they include peacekeeping and peace enforcement as well as conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace building and humanitarian operations.*” While all these elements of peace support operations are undeniably important, the major concern of *military* doctrine must be peacekeeping and peace enforcement.

There is little room for debate or speculation on extant peacekeeping doctrine, as it has evolved from 51 years of UN experience. The principles of peacekeeping are largely uncontested across existing global divides. The crunch comes when the debate turns to peace enforcement. This constitutes the logical focus of the further discussion of NATO progress within the scope of this article.

## MINIMAL CONSENSUS AT WORK: NATO'S PEACE ENFORCEMENT DOCTRINE

NATO has articulated a doctrine that *"... is to be used as the guidance for planning all NATO Peace Support Operations (PSO) and exercises ... where practical, it takes account of national doctrines and UN policies."*<sup>7</sup> Such national doctrines include, of course, the military doctrine of the most powerful alliance member. Whereas most countries attempt to separate various forms of counterinsurgency and low intensity warfare doctrine from the notion of peace operations, the US recognises the utility of incorporating such doctrine into its concept of peace support operations. According to the US Army:

*"The principles of OOTW [Operations Other Than War], as outlined in FM 100-5, apply to the conduct of peace operations. Although peace operations are clearly OOTW, many tasks at the tactical and operational levels may require the focused and sustained application of force. This is particularly true of [peace enforcement] actions. Thus, while the principles of OOTW provide guidance for the conduct of the great majority of peace operations, the principles of war and doctrine for conduct of war in FM 100-5 must be included in the planning process for all peace operations."*<sup>8</sup>

With this kind of thinking, it is not surprising that extant NATO peace support operation doctrine goes way beyond 'UN peacekeeping doctrine' — especially with respect to the utility and use of force in pursuit of mission objectives. NATO doctrine is also strongly informed by British Army doctrinal thinkers, who draw on years of experience in counterinsurgency operations. NATO has thus managed to produce some unambiguous doctrinal statements on 'peace enforcement' as the significant alternative to peacekeeping when consent and compliance are absent, but where there is a strong rationale for multinational intervention.

Indeed, it has been stated upfront that:

*"NATO has the unique capability to deploy, direct, and command and control operations mounted to take peace enforcement action against those responsible for threats to peace or security, or who carry out acts of aggression. As such, this is the most likely task for a NATO force in support of the UN."*<sup>9</sup>

The doctrine elaborates on the fact that the link between political and military objectives of peace enforcement must be very close, and that the aim of peace enforcement operations *"... will not be the defeat or destruction of an enemy, but rather to compel or coerce any or all parties to comply with a particular course of action."*

In NATO thinking, the increasingly popular (though not uncontested) notion of 'humanitarian intervention' is firmly linked to the concept of peace enforcement. NATO peace support operation doctrine does not refer to 'humanitarian intervention', but does specify 'humanitarian operations' as a subset of peace support operations. By way of definition, it explains simply that:

*"Humanitarian operations are conducted to alleviate human suffering. Humanitarian operations may precede or accompany humanitarian activities provided by specialised civilian organisations."*<sup>10</sup>

Briefly mentioned under the rubric of humanitarian operations are 'humanitarian assistance', 'disaster relief', and 'protection of human rights'. Under the latter, the doctrine states that:

*"The protection of human rights is a fundamental element of all military operations. However, the prevention and redress of wide spread abuses to human rights will require a [peace enforcement] force ..."*<sup>11</sup>

Importantly, the doctrine goes on to emphasise that, "[i]n the conduct of [peace enforcement] the link between political and military objectives must be extremely close", while recognising that such interventions are "... increasingly into situations of widespread human rights abuses including genocide and ethnic cleansing associated with collapsed or collapsing states."<sup>12</sup> In effect, such doctrinal statements obviate the need to agonise over a doctrine for 'humanitarian intervention' — for this is integral to present conceptualisations of peace enforcement.

Beyond these key statements on peace enforcement (and a reiteration of UN principles for peacekeeping), NATO peace support operation doctrine focuses heavily on entry criteria and endstates. However, the means available to interventionists will always fall horribly short of desirable endstates, and it is unlikely that contemporary conflict scenarios will produce rational entry criteria — especially where Africa is concerned. Africans, however, should take careful note of this mainstream doctrine. It not only addresses issues of 'how to intervene', but it also provides vital clues about 'who should intervene', where the articulated criteria for intervention are simply not present. It also provides critical information on the limits of forceful action that is likely to be tolerated or legitimised by the 'heavyweights' of the international system.

However, any forceful conflict resolution action in Africa will have to be undertaken by Africans themselves. Beyond the inherent limitations of the UN system, sensitivity to violence and the low tolerance for casualties effectively eliminate Western involvement in any type of peace enforcement operation that goes beyond the 'distant retaliation doctrine' underpinning Operation Desert Storm and the more recent NATO aerial operations in Kosovo. The reluctance to deploy ground forces in combat situations where the distinction between friend and foe, or soldier and civilian is unclear, is far greater when the region in question is of little strategic significance — as is the case with most conflict zones in Africa.

## CONTINENTAL EFFORTS TO DEVELOP AFRICAN PEACE SUPPORT OPERATION DOCTRINE

Even if some or most of NATO's entry and exit requirements can be met, the prospects of outside intervention remain weak as long as no Western power feels threatened by African conflicts. This is morally indefensible and potentially subversive of the idea of enforcing general human standards under multilateral authorisation, and clearly contravenes the legal obligation of governments to deal with acts of genocide. However, it serves no purpose to bemoan the situation and wait for the dawning of a new international rectitude. Africans should rather focus on what can (and cannot) be done by Africans themselves under these circumstances.

These sentiments were echoed in the following opening statement by the Secretary General of the OAU at a meeting convened to deliberate the future of peacekeeping in Africa:

*"OAU Member States can no longer afford to stand aloof and expect the International Community to care more for our problems than we do, or indeed to find solutions to those problems which in many instances, have been of our own making. The simple truth that we must confront today, is that the world does not owe us a living and we must remain in the forefront of efforts to act and act speedily, to prevent conflicts from getting out of control."*<sup>13</sup>

Dr Salim was speaking at the Second Meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of Member States of the OAU Central Organ, which was held in Harare from 24-25 October 1997. This meeting was specifically tasked to arrive at concrete and workable recommendations relating to the logistics, finance, training, doctrine, structure and operational planning needed for the conduct of African peace support

operations. The mandate emanated from the previous year's meeting of the Chiefs of Staff, which had called for a working group of military experts to "... *come out with practical and realistic recommendations on the technical issues raised*" at the meeting on the subject of peace operations under OAU auspices.<sup>14</sup>

The OAU Secretariat had decided that this experts meeting would be held just prior to the second meeting of the Chiefs of Staff, and that it would be divided into three subgroups, dealing respectively with logistics and funding; doctrine, training and liaison; and command, control and communications. The subgroup on doctrine, training and liaison was more specifically requested to develop "... *guidelines which should inform doctrine and training*" for the conduct of peace operations.<sup>15</sup>

In order to focus the deliberations of this group, a background discussion paper was provided by the Secretariat, and three officers were tasked to make brief presentations on issues of doctrine and training. The group would address more specific issues as they arose during the course of the deliberations. Given the diverse and multinational composition of the group, it was inevitable that discussions could not be rigidly structured, and space was allowed for coping with national sensitivities and differences of opinion.

Such sensitivities soon became apparent, with one member objecting at the outset to the group's intent to discuss *doctrine*. The objection was based on the grounds that the matters under discussion had no approval at the policy level, and that doctrine was a political and strategic concept. This, it was felt, implied abrogating the OAU principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states, and could not be discussed by a group of military experts. After lengthy deliberation, it was decided to refer to the development of recommendations on 'guidelines' or 'concepts' for the conduct of peace operations, rather than to 'doctrine'.

There were also strong objections to the content of the discussion document. It was argued that it contained revolutionary ideas which reflected extracontinental proposals that contradicted both the OAU Charter and the Cairo Declaration of 1993. The meeting continued only after it was explained that the discussion document had no official status, and that it did not negate the classic peacekeeping principles of consent, impartiality and the non-use of force. The document merely urged the experts to go beyond these principles to suggest ways in which the OAU might take meaningful action in order to prevent and resolve conflicts and alleviate human suffering.

Nevertheless, after two days of deliberation, the group could only reach consensus on the notion that the OAU should adopt and adapt the concepts, principles and practices of UN peacekeeping, and that member states should only engage in peace operations mandated by the UN. The latter point, namely that all operations involving OAU member states may only be conducted under a UN mandate was challenged by the question: "*What happens when there is a crisis or impending crisis, and there is no UN mandate?*" This was followed by the more pertinent question: "*Why would the UN not react to a crisis?*" The answers included a lack of finances and other resources — including political will.

It was felt that this problem may best be addressed by OAU efforts to strengthen UN capacity for peace operations, by placing African crises on the UN agenda, and by providing the bulk of a ready force package for utilisation by the UN. However, it was noted that the OAU or subregional organisations may have to take action first in order to place matters on the UN agenda, as illustrated by the decision of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to impose sanctions on the military rulers of Sierra Leone, which was later endorsed by the Security Council.

Given the reality of a number of existing crises on the continent, the need was expressed for a clear vision of what the OAU can realistically be expected to do to ameliorate conflict where the UN is unable, unwilling, or slow to act. The concept that eventually emerged for the conduct of OAU peace operations included the use of subregional organisations, as a possible first line of reaction where the OAU is unable to act.

After considering the report and recommendations of the 'Group of Military Experts', the Chiefs of Defence Staff adopted the following pertinent recommendations on the concept of African peace support operations:

- All peace support operations in Africa should be conducted in a manner consistent with both the UN and the OAU Charters and the Cairo Declaration.
- The OAU should evolve a glossary of OAU peace operation terminology to ensure common understanding.
- As a principle, the OAU should take the first initiative in approaching the UN to deploy a peace operation in response to an emergency on the continent. If the UN is unresponsive, the OAU must take preliminary action while continuing its efforts to elicit a positive response from the world body.
- All peace support operations conducted by subregional organisations in Africa should be endorsed by the OAU.
- Where the OAU deploys a peace operation, this should be an all-African force. In the event of a UN operation in Africa, the UN principle of universality should be respected. Where Africa provides the majority of troops, the force commander must be an African.<sup>16</sup>

The working group also reasoned that, if the concept of peace operations under the auspices of the OAU is accepted, then the Central Organ needs to have some type of military instrument at hand for preliminary interventions. It was felt that this may be provided by a workable system of African standby arrangements, and that such a system would enjoy more support if contributors had an idea of the overall requirement of the end-user (the OAU). In this regard, the Chiefs of Defence Staff recommended that:

*"The OAU could earmark a brigade-sized contribution to standby arrangements from each of the five African sub-regions as a starting point, which could then be adjusted upwards or downwards according to evolving circumstances."*

They added that, *"[w]hile the OAU should adopt standard UN staff procedures for training and operations, it must also develop its own Standard Operating Procedures"* and that *"these must be disseminated to Member States for use in training and preparation for peace operations."*<sup>17</sup>

Needless to say, there has been little progress on the implementation of any of these recommendations at the continental level. Nor has a third meeting of the Chiefs of Staff been convened, which might trigger some urgent action in this regard. Not that this makes much difference from the perspective of doctrinal development. The recommendations that emerged on 'the concept of African peace support operations' were a compromise that amounts to little more than a move towards the 'Africanisation' of UN peacekeeping — something that had already been done in Angola and which was more recently applied in the Central African Republic.

However, the Chiefs of Staff did provide recognition for the concept of subregional engagement in peace operations, and this is perhaps where more significant progress will be made in the realm of future doctrinal development.

## PROGRESS AT THE SUBREGIONAL LEVEL: SADC

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), as an intergovernmental entity, has not succeeded in progressing much further than the OAU in the articulation of a common doctrine for peace support operations that includes peace enforcement. Indeed, while the southern region, over the past year, has witnessed two extremely forceful 'multilateral' military interventions under the auspices of SADC, the organisation's military leaders have clung to the notion of embracing a

'universal UN doctrine' for the conduct of peace support operations. Doctrinal development has therefore been informed less by regional multinational operational experience than by 'mainstream' UN-type training and capacity-building initiatives.

For example, the most recent meeting of the Operations Sub-Sub Committee of the (Southern African) Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC) did not address the issue of doctrine for peace support operations, but chose to focus rather on training and capacity-building issues.<sup>18</sup> The debate on the latter has largely been shaped by the Harare-based Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre (RPTC), which specialises in the presentation of a variety of UN peacekeeping courses for select members of the armed forces of the SADC countries. This role and focus have been embraced by the ISDSC, with the Operations Sub-Committee recommending that the *"ISDSC Defence Sub-Committee officially endorses Zimbabwe as the Regional Peace Keeping Training Centre."* The March 1999 meeting of this committee was also presented with a report by the RPTC on a seminar that it had convened to consider the future of peacekeeping training in the SADC region.

Importantly, the deliberations of this seminar were guided by the assumption that: *"[a]ny [peacekeeping] capacity building within SADC should occur within the UN framework and comply with UN doctrine, procedures, guidelines, etc."*<sup>19</sup> The only decision taken at this seminar that is vaguely related to doctrinal development, is recorded as follows: *"Drawing from the direction of the ISDSC, the RPTC would provide guidance on peacekeeping concepts and serve as a repository for regional peacekeeping Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) and policy documents."*<sup>20</sup> Thus, at the (official) regional level, there is a blind adherence to 'UN doctrine' with any further debate on doctrine for peace enforcement remaining taboo.

At the unofficial level, however, some modest but promising progress has been made in advancing a more 'enlightened' approach to the issue of doctrinal development. On the initiative of the Institute for Security Studies and the Institute for International Relations (IIR), the RPTC agreed to host an unofficial regional workshop on *Integrated principles for peace support operations* from 24-26 August 1999.<sup>21</sup> Mindful of the objections raised to the term 'doctrine' at the second OAU Chiefs of Defence Staff Meeting, the stated aim of this workshop was to:

*"Enhance mutual understanding of the principles and guidelines for the conduct of PSO at the operational and tactical levels, through the proposal of workable solutions to existing problems and the recommendation of research projects to address those key problems/issues that could not be adequately addressed by the participants."*

The deliberations of the workshop participants were informed by a number of discussion papers, including a draft working paper to orientate participants and to guide discussions. The idea was to initiate a deliberate process which examines the best evidence of past conflicts, and draws on African opinions and African experiences to bring together a considered, robust set of statements that will inform the evolution of doctrine for peace support. It was agreed that the workshop should focus on doctrine (i.e. the operational and tactical levels) rather than political, legal or strategic matters. These higher levels normally result in nebulous discussions without form or conclusion. The working document contained some forthright questions, such as:

- *Is there such a thing as 'UN doctrine for peace support operations'? If so, what is its strengths and limitations?*
- *If Western doctrinal publications are not suitable for Africa, where are they deficient?*
- *How can we express the doctrine deficit with regard to Africa's requirements?*
- *How can we best approach the deficit — by a series of statements relating to Africa or a whole new doctrine?*

Participants found that the much vaunted UN doctrine on peace support operations consists of some training notes, manuals, and videos covering tactical matters. There is also a seventeen-page document on the conduct of peacekeeping operations, but it is thin on detail. Similarly, peacekeeping manuals from the Nordic countries emphasise 'peacekeeping' techniques at the tactical level, largely

to the exclusion of operational concepts. These publications all emphasise techniques, drills and procedures, and do not really address key issues of doctrine at the operational level.

It was also felt that training exercises within SADC, based on such tactical skills, have emphasised doctrinal weaknesses, and that SADC should train to a common doctrine that embraces the types of peace support operations that member countries are conducting, or are most likely to conduct in future. At the moment, standard operating procedures are being developed to fill the doctrinal lacuna. However, these do not address critical facets such as multinational command arrangements and relations between the regional military and civilian structures.

Without the political baggage associated with 'official status', participants readily agreed that the doctrinal deficit in Africa centres around the need to define circumstances which should trigger peace enforcement methods. They agreed that extant traditional peacekeeping doctrine is not sufficiently robust to confront the new challenges of conflict resolution in Africa, and that warfare doctrine is overly destructive. Furthermore, warfighting doctrine is predicated upon the defeat of a designated enemy and does not address the peacebuilding and reconciliation challenges necessary to create a secure and self-sustaining society and environment.

The widely known *British joint warfare publication* (JWP 3-50 Peace Support Operations) attempts to address the issue of enforcement actions within peace support operations. For example, the Kenya Defence College uses JWP 3-50 as its basic teaching document. In South Africa, JWP 3-50 has also influenced the recent white paper on *South African participation in international peace missions*, as well as the 'peace missions' chapter in the new *SA Army joint warfare manual*. Although there has been a significant recent revision of JWP 3-50, this does not take the unique dynamics of African peace support operations into account.

Participants felt that there is a need for a more comprehensive doctrinal publication to address this issue coherently and provide, *inter alia*, operational concepts, as well as tactical standard operating procedures. While extant (NATO) peace support operation doctrine goes a long way in filling the doctrinal lacuna between traditional peacekeeping and warfare, it needs to be updated and modified to suit the realities of Africa. The workshop subsequently arrived at a significant number of 'doctrinal statements', or observations with doctrinal implications, based on African operational experience, that should inform future doctrinal development.

Participants also identified a number of areas that could not be adequately addressed during the workshop, but which nevertheless merited further analysis. These have been expressed as future academic research projects.<sup>22</sup> In terms of immediate steps towards addressing the 'doctrinal deficit', the preference was expressed for a comprehensive draft publication, which could be circulated for comment as widely as possible in the form of a discussion document — rather than attempting to work from scratch and 'redesign the wheel'.

The author of the current NATO doctrine<sup>23</sup> was therefore asked (and kindly agreed) to produce a draft version of his 'peace support operation' doctrine which takes account of the special needs of peace support operations in the African context and incorporates the doctrinal ideas developed during the workshop. The product of this endeavour will be in the form of a working draft which will be circulated among select African command and staff colleges (and relevant African research institutions) with requests for comments. The idea is to begin an interactive process of peer review and refinement that will lead to greater consensus on peace support operation doctrine in Africa to influence decision-making and training across the continent.

Participants recognised the problem of endorsement, and realised that the process of developing a common and integrated doctrine will necessarily be continuous, becoming more and more inclusive in time. There was consensus that the widening process should result in the early inclusion of West African experts in the debate. Ideally, deliberations should extend to all regions and language groups in Africa — but it was agreed that this must be preceded by a deepening and consolidation of tentative gains, lest these be lost through premature 'overreach'.

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS FROM WEST AFRICAN EXPERIENCES

Although not articulated or presented as such, some basic tenets of African doctrine for peace support operations are emerging from West Africa. This has not been a deliberate construct of ECOWAS, but rather a by-product of the involvement of members of this organisation in regional peace operations over the past nine years.

The ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was formed spontaneously in August 1990 as a direct reaction to the carnage caused by the civil war in Liberia. The communiqué of the summit meeting of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee held in Banjul, The Gambia from 6-8 August 1990, mandated ECOMOG to keep peace in Liberia by separating the warring factions, as a precursor to further diplomatic initiatives aimed at the resolution of the crisis. The force was also tasked with the provision of humanitarian assistance and with the creation of a security zone around the capital city of Monrovia. The co-operation of the belligerent factions was assumed and expected.<sup>24</sup>

Armed with a peacekeeping mandate, ECOMOG forces landed in Monrovia on 24 August 1990, only to be met by fierce gunfire from the forces of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia. No cease-fire was in place and the refusal of a major party to the conflict to accept the impartiality of ECOMOG meant that the force found it extremely difficult to execute its peacekeeping mandate. Indeed, within its relatively short lifespan, ECOMOG was forced to go the full cycle of peace support operations — from peacekeeping and peace enforcement in Liberia, to 'restorative intervention' in Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau.<sup>25</sup>

Speaking at a recent ISS conference, former ECOMOG force commander, Brigadier-General Mitikishe Khobe categorised the type of peace operations conducted under the auspices of ECOWAS as intervention missions; peace enforcement missions; and peacekeeping missions.<sup>26</sup> His description of each type of operation is briefly summarised below.

### Intervention missions

ECOMOG intervention missions involve combat action against insurgents or factions which resist the authority of the *de facto* government of a country suffering from a complex emergency caused by armed violence. Such intervention missions are aimed at securing a cease-fire, creating an atmosphere conducive to negotiations, and protecting non-combatants through the establishment of safe havens for civilians under direct ECOMOG protection.

Although such interventions should be premised on the consent of the conflicting parties, it is accepted that the situation prior to an intervention operation will often preclude securing the agreement of all the parties to the conflict. Nevertheless, ECOMOG intervention operations have been successful in forcing armed factions to accept negotiations which, in most cases, lead to the signing of cease-fire agreements.

### Peace enforcement

ECOMOG has been tasked to monitor and enforce the provisions of cease-fire agreements brought about through intervention operations and diplomatic peacemaking efforts. Because the factions that have signed these agreements have not always done so in good faith, violations have been rampant. ECOMOG has thus accepted the need to use force to get recalcitrant parties to adhere to what they have agreed upon. This may involve outright and large-scale military operations against the most belligerent insurgent group or groups.

ECOMOG peace enforcement operations have always resulted in a widening of the initial safe havens established for non-combatants. This is due to the fact that the belligerents have not been conventional armies, and their strategy has been to inflict intolerable hardship on the civilian

population in order to make ECOMOG and the legitimate authority it is supporting unpopular. ECOMOG operations have thus also aimed at compelling recalcitrant armed factions to realise that they cannot obtain their political objectives by military action.

## Peacekeeping

Where a negotiated general peace settlement has been reached, ECOMOG has transitioned from enforcement to peacekeeping operations. A consistent aspect of such settlements has been the inclusion of provisions for the disarmament of belligerents, the formation of an interim or transitional government (including military reform), the return of refugees, and the staging of a general election. ECOMOG is typically tasked to carry out disarmament, ensure the security of the interim or transitional government, as well as UN personnel, and to assist in the military reform and the conduct of the general elections.

ECOMOG's transition from peace enforcement to peacekeeping roles has obviously not been easy. It takes considerable effort, time and diplomacy to persuade the factions that were engaged in combat with ECOMOG that the force is capable of neutrality. However, ECOMOG has largely overcome such difficulties. In Liberia, the force successfully executed the disarmament of combatants and assisted with the return to a state of law and order.[27](#)

## ECOMOG doctrinal thinking

This description of ECOMOG operations roughly parallels (or indeed precedes) developments in NATO doctrinal thinking. In fact, it goes quite a bit further than extant NATO doctrine in that it provides for 'intervention operations'. Although these are not explicitly 'humanitarian interventions', ECOWAS can lay equal claim to such motives as NATO did with its humanitarian bombardment of Serbia and Kosovo. After all, 'humanitarian intervention' may be defined simply as "*... military intervention in a state without the approval of its authorities, for the purpose of preventing widespread suffering or death among its inhabitants.*"[28](#)

A number of other 'doctrinal statements' were made at the ISS conference by Brigadier-General E T Dowyaro of the Nigerian Army. He noted that, once the ECOMOG task metamorphosed into hybrid operations involving peacekeeping, counterinsurgency and peace enforcement, the principles of internal security operations were applied in varying degrees, according to their relevance to particular phases of operations. Dowyaro lists these principles as follows:

- Justification: There must be legal justification for each separate act of force, and such acts should not be continued longer than necessary to achieve the immediate aim.
- Prevention: The only object of the use of force is to suppress actual disturbances. Force must never be applied as a reprisal or with punitive intent.
- Minimum force: Only that force which is absolutely necessary to achieve the immediate military aim should be applied.
- Maintenance of public confidence: To depress the morale of dissidents, every effort should be made to win and foster public confidence and support.
- Legal obligation: Members of the armed forces must comply with the law and act calmly and impartially.
- Evidence: The commander on the spot must record accurate evidence of any incidents pertaining to a civil disturbance.
- Safeguarding local citizens: Care must be taken not to endanger innocent civilians.[29](#)

This inclusion of aspects of 'internal security operations' as part of the concept of peace support operations echoes, in some respects, contemporary Russian thinking on peacekeeping. In addition to political solutions supported by multilateral military interventions, Russia accepts that forceful methods will be required in order to maintain internal stability, and that some individual instances of instability will require decisive action by organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) and by the internal troops.<sup>30</sup>

Whether or not such principles will or should find their way into an African doctrine for peace support operations remains a matter for debate and consultation. However, it is important not to discard such 'doctrinal statements' as being extraneous to the 'peacekeeping debate'. Observations and statements by former ECOMOG commanders obviously do not constitute an eloquent and integrated doctrine for African peace support operations. There is room for much refinement and adjustment and, importantly, a need for a broader acceptance of such principles in Africa and abroad.

Progress in the evolution of West African doctrine for peace support, as in the case of NATO in the Balkans, has evolved less from academic reflection and the deliberations of 'experts' than from the harsh experiences of force commanders and peacekeepers on the ground. The difference is that the 'lessons learned' from the ECOMOG operations have not been as widely analysed, and they are certainly not as well-packaged as those that have emerged from the Balkans. However, they do provide a far more robust and practical articulation of principles and guidelines for the conduct of peace support operations in Africa than what has hitherto been produced by either the OAU or by SADC.

## CONCLUSION

In Western states, doctrinal thinkers have been preoccupied with questions of consent: hence the quarrels over Chapter VI or Chapter VII (traditional peacekeeping versus peace support operations). But this is essentially a non-issue. On the one hand, everyone knows how to do Chapter VI peacekeeping (within a benign security environment, of course). Everyone wants to do this kind of peacekeeping, even with its newfound 'multifunctionality'. Indeed, a whole industry has developed around new generation (Chapter VI) peacekeeping with its attendant 'civilian component' and notions of 'new peacekeeping partnerships'.

On the other hand, no-one really knows how to do peace enforcement operations with (or without) a Chapter VII mandate. And no-one really wants to do these operations — unless, of course, there are very strongly perceived own interests at stake. Hence, the concept of peace enforcement remains an extremely underdeveloped area of military doctrine — even though it is perhaps the most needed. The progress made by NATO in developing a doctrine for peace enforcement is encouraging, and there is no doubt much to be learned from this by African countries. However, doctrine is informed by military capabilities and structures, and there are limits to the applicability (or desirability) of NATO's high-technology approach to intervention.

In the African context, it should be remembered that the whole issue of building African 'peacekeeping capacity' is inextricably linked to the Rwandan genocide of 1994. There is nothing wrong with building African capacity, but this has to be linked to a realistic concept of operations and modalities for extremely rapid deployment. What was needed in Rwanda in April 1994, was 'humanitarian intervention' which, as is evident from NATO peace support operation doctrine, means 'peace enforcement'.

If this is the kind of contingency that Africans should prepare for, then the OAU Chiefs of Staff recommendation of a standby brigade in each of the five African subregions may not be such a bad idea. However, SADC is modeling its standby brigade on the UN Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG), a hollow formation designed to do what everyone wants to do — consensual peacekeeping. Subregional initiatives should clearly not be based on the development of more hollow capacity, but should rather be guided by the type of operations for which there is a proven demand in Africa, and by operational concepts that can actually be executed by regional formations.

The articulation by Africans — either at the continental or the subregional level — of a clear and unambiguous peace support operation doctrine that includes peace enforcement operations, is clearly a *sine qua non* for meaningful ‘peacekeeping’ capacity-building. Training must be informed by relevant doctrine, and this approach has several obvious advantages over the current ‘ostrich’ mentality. It will provide clear guidelines for mission planning and for the command and control of operations. It will provide operational and tactical level commanders with a much clearer concept of operations and will facilitate much more realistic and meaningful training for such operations. In the process, many lives may be saved.

A collateral benefit relates to the willingness of donor countries to provide much needed financial and logistic support to African peace operations. If potential contributors are convinced that they are being called upon to support operations that are clearly circumscribed as peace support operations, with appropriate limits and boundaries set for the use of force, they should be far more willing to lend assistance than has thus far been the case. The process of developing consensus around such doctrine will be time-consuming and demanding. As such, it needs to attract some of the donor support that is currently directed towards the more popular realm of ‘UN peacekeeping training’. It is this irony that will, perhaps more than any other single factor, inhibit the further development of ‘integrated doctrine’ for peace support operations in Africa.

## Endnotes

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9. NATO, *Bi-MNC Directive*, op cit, p 9.
10. NATO, *AJP-3.4.1 Peace support operations*, 2nd Study Draft, 1999, p 3-11.
11. Ibid, pp 3-12.
12. Ibid, pp 3-5 to 3-6.
13. Address by HE Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary General of the OAU at the second meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of Member States of the OAU Central Organ, Harare, 24 October 1997.
14. The First Chiefs of Defence Staff Meeting of the Central Organ of the OAU was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 3 to 6 June 1996.

15. M Malan (comp), *Report of the military experts sub-group on concepts, training and liaison*, Harare, 22 October 1997.
16. OAU Secretariat, *Draft report of the Second Meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution*, Harare, 25 October 1999.
17. Ibid.
18. During the meeting of the 20th Session of the ISDSC, held in Swaziland during March 1999.
19. SADC Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre, *Report of the SADC seminar on peacekeeping training*, Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre, Harare, 27 — 31 July 1998.
20. Ibid.
21. Participation was not based upon any regional grouping or mandate. Rather, the group was constituted through personal networks that enabled the identification of a number of experienced military officers and civilian experts who were willing and able to contribute to a candid debate in pursuit of the aim and objectives of the workshop. The group that finally assembled in Harare included military officers from Botswana, Britain, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe — as well as a few civilian scholars and experts.
22. For a detailed exposition of the discussions and recommendations, see M Malan, [Integrated principles for peace support operations](#), ISS, Pretoria, 1999.
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24. S V L Malu, 'Political control and guidance of peace support operations in Africa: An ECOMOG perspective', paper presented at an international workshop on *Towards a global consensus on peace support operations: The African dimension*, op cit. Major-General Malu is a former ECOMOG force commander and is presently Chief of Army Staff, Nigerian Army.
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27. ECOMOG did not succeed in carrying out military reform because of the determination of the NPFL, which won the general elections, to exclude other armed groups from the military.
28. A Roberts, *Humanitarian action in war: Aid, protection and impartiality in a policy vacuum*, Adelphi Paper 305, IISS, 1996, p 19.
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# Peacekeeping in the Former Soviet Union: Lessons for Africa

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*Dmitri Trenin, Carnegie Moscow Center*

## INTRODUCTION

This article attempts to analyse the decade-long experience of peacekeeping in the territory of the former Soviet Union. Like the Soviet Union itself, the former Soviet Union is increasingly an historical notion. Yet, when it comes to peacekeeping — used here in the broadest possible sense — the former Soviet Union reveals some common features and offers some interesting insights.

The article is divided into sections dealing with:

- the nature of conflicts raging in post-Soviet space;
- the nature of the political environment where they are taking place;
- the ways and means of outside intervention to prevent, stop and resolve conflicts;
- the assessment of the results achieved so far;
- the outlook for the future; and
- the lessons learned in the process.

## NATURE OF CONFLICTS

The immediate cause of the conflicts in the post-Soviet space was the end of the USSR which, as the 20th century incarnation of the historical Russian empire, had kept much of the conflict potential among the hundred-plus ethnic groups over which it ruled under a tight lid. It is occasionally argued that the Soviet Union was overturned by the forces of national liberation that had managed to prevail in its constituent republics, leaving the central government isolated and impotent. On the face of it, this looks plausible. After all, the USSR was formally dissolved on 8 December 1991 by the leaders of its three founding members — Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus — assembled at a hunting lodge on the Polish border. This was preceded by a pro-independence referendum in the Ukraine, the second largest republic, and by independence declarations adopted by parliaments in all other Soviet states. Yet, the decisive factor was the split within the Moscow élite, the more radical part of which had opted early on for a strategy of coming to power by upgrading the status of the Russian republic to full sovereignty and thus obviating the reform-shy Soviet authorities. The Russian radicals were hardly interested in the fate of the other fourteen republics. With regard to the national liberation movement, it manifested itself in but a few places, mostly the Baltic states, and to a lesser extent in Georgia and Moldova. Apart from several incidents, in which a total of three dozen people lost their lives during 1990-1991, the central government was unable and unwilling to provide serious opposition to the champions of independence.

There is some confusion over the use of the term 'empire' when applied to the USSR. Unlike the traditional maritime empires of Britain, France, Portugal, and others, the Russian state grew through

its relentless overland expansion, annexing or otherwise acquiring territories populated by scores of ethnic groups without, however, destroying their homelands, or religious affiliations. The result was a huge multi-ethnic, multireligious country, spreading over one-sixth of the earth's surface, which lacked a clear distinction between metropolitan territory and colonies. The imperial nobility included barons and princes drawn from virtually all its ethnic groups, and Russian peasants — the bulk of the population — were as much oppressed as their peers in Central Asia or the Caucasus, and even more so than their rather more fortunate cousins in Poland or Finland. Effectively, 'Russia' meant that part of the world, extending from Poland in the west to Port Arthur on the Yellow Sea, ruled by the Tsar. Thus, 'Russian' denoted any subject of the Tsar, irrespective of ethnicity. Since the Russian Orthodox Church was *de facto* an arm of the state apparatus, and was never allowed to play an independent role since the late 17th century, it was the national interest in religious affairs, or better said *Staatsraison*, that clearly prevailed. If comparisons have to be made, the Russian state had much more in common with the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian monarchies than with the classical Western European colonial empires. The Soviet Union added much to this unique historical experience, but it did not change its very essence. Ironically, however, the USSR's historic mission has turned out to be of great help to the various nations in achieving eventual independence from Russia. Doubly ironic, it was the Russian component within the Soviet Union, the former relentless 'gatherer of lands', that now paved the way for the independent existence of these countries.

Thus, in a most remarkable way, except for Chechnya — a very special case to be discussed below — not a single armed conflict in the post-Soviet space is of a colonial nature, resulting from a clash between the former metropolitan power (the Russian Federation) and one or several of its former colonies. What is doubly remarkable, is that there have been no direct conflicts so far between the newly independent states — although Armenia and Azerbaijan came very close in the Karabakh conflict. This latter phenomenon may be attributed to a range of factors, from the awareness of their own weaknesses to the peculiar solidarity among the republican level sections of the former Soviet *nomenklatura* whose leaders assumed power in the new states. Probably of greater importance was the common concern that, should *any* boundaries among the Soviet republics be contested, this would open a Pandora's box, leading to *all* boundaries being contested, with the new states likely being overwhelmed by the double challenge of external irredentism and internal separatism. It is precisely this separatism which is a clear and present danger throughout the former Soviet space.

Within the USSR, only the 15 title nations of the constituent republics of the Union were formally entitled to secede — although there was no mechanism for this until 1991, and until Gorbachev's *perestroika*, even a discussion of such a possibility was regarded as high treason. All other ethnic groups that had territorial autonomy within the USSR were placed under the formal authority of one of the constituent republics. In reality, most decisions were taken at the union level. As the union started to crumble, some of the autonomous entities, ever resentful of 'their' republics, claimed full independence. Thus, as republics were leaving the union, several autonomous regions were breaking away from these republics. The situation resembled that of a *matryoshka* — the traditional Russian nest of dolls — except that it was not at least as light-hearted.

Unlike the dismantling of the union, this second level disintegration was not considered legal, and armed conflicts were often the result. Abkhazia, Chechnya, Karabakh, South Ossetia, Transdniestria all fought wars against, respectively, Georgia, Russia, Azerbaijan and Moldova — and all won (the result of the second conflict in Chechnya is still pending). The five tiny states, albeit unrecognised, have become a reality of the post-Soviet space. What is remarkable is that relatively few conflicts of this nature occurred, and some of the potentially most explosive ones, such as the Crimea versus the Ukraine, and Tatarstan versus Russia, were successfully managed through political means.

Further, some of the ethnically homogeneous states experienced difficulties with nationbuilding. Of these, Tajikistan became the site of a protracted civil war (1992-1997) fought among the various regional clans for the control of the central government.

All states in the former USSR, with the exception of the three Baltic states, remain extremely weak, with some of them failing. Russia experiences particular difficulties with building a genuine federation. The unitary governments, such as the Ukraine, are being confronted with the issue of regionalisation. Across the former USSR, post-Communist transformation of the whole fabric of society is fraught with conflicts of every kind. Of particular relevance is the challenge of militant political Islam which is

strongest where the temporal authorities are most corrupt and inefficient — as in the North Caucasus and Central Asia.

## NATURE OF POLITICAL TERRAIN

All newly independent states of Eurasia have *Russia* in common, as a neighbour and an historical hegemon. Russian dominance in this region lasted at least for a century, and often much longer. The peculiar nature of the Russian empire, and of the Soviet Union was discussed above. The current Russian Federation is very close to the new states geographically. It is not separated from them by any stretch of water, and regards all the new states as areas of vital national interest. One salient factor is the presence in this area of some 25 million ethnic Russian residents. Despite all its enormous and apparently intractable problems, Russia, while certainly down, is definitely not out. It is true that Russian political, economic and military influence is waning. But, as the old links between Moscow and the former borderlands become eroded, new ones are sought. The Russian language, although no longer the official medium, remains the lingua franca throughout the entire region.

The unsung hero of the post-Soviet space is the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which has been constantly ridiculed for its impotence as a vehicle for new integration. However, this has never been the true vocation of the CIS. The institution deserves the highest marks for helping to dismantle the huge authoritarian empire in the smoothest and most orderly, even legalistic way. Its corollary mission has been to assist the new states — in 1991, states in name only — toward actual independence. The CIS provides a network of useful contacts for the leadership, and facilitates communication — including mostly visa-free travel — among the public. The replacement of the USSR with the CIS in December 1991 soothed the blow of Soviet collapse for many, buying vitally important time for psychological adjustment.

Both the Russian presence and the CIS are variations of recent realities. The end of the USSR marked some important discontinuities as well. The old Soviet border, effectively sealing off one-sixth of the world from the other five-sixths, is no more. Moscow's attempt to control borders jointly — essentially Russian controlled — has largely failed. Rather, *the former barrier became an interface for all kinds of interaction*. Some of the historical players, such as Turkey, Iran and China, are back again. Some new actors, such as private Islamic foundations, extended their area of operation far to the north. Afghanistan, invaded by the Soviet army in 1979, has become a generator of tension across the former Soviet Central Asia. To the envy and dismay of the Russian élite, the United States has become the prevailing power across Eurasia.

All the states of the former USSR, whether their location is in Europe or Asia, inherited membership of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) from the old union. The OSCE effectively means an institutionalised Western presence in the whole CIS area with a mission to prevent conflict, monitor human rights, and help with democratisation and post-conflict rehabilitation.

## NATURE OF INTERVENTION

The Soviet Union — having boasted that it has 'solved the nationalities issue' — was much too complacent to deal with simmering ethnic conflicts. When it began to react in force, since 1989, it was already too late. At best, Soviet military interventions brought only temporarily stability, as in the Ferghana valley and Tajikistan in 1990. Worse, such interventions contributed to the collapse of the union, as in Georgia in 1989 and Lithuania and Latvia in 1991. At the very worst, the disintegrating Soviet army became enmeshed in the fighting in Karabakh in 1991, and its arsenals became the prime source of weapons and ammunition for ethnic warriors.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated, the Russian government concentrated on the issue of economic reform. The foreign ministry was busy promoting new friendly ties with the West, while Russia did not even have diplomatic missions in the newly independent states. The task of containing conflicts and stopping violence was *de facto* left to the Russian army, or rather former Soviet military garrisons taken over by the Russian Federation which were located near the scenes of conflict. It was up to these forces and their commanders to act as peacemakers. They were an unlikely group to perform the task, but there were no other takers.<sup>1</sup>

The critics of Russian peacekeeping usually claim that Russia was hardly impartial or disinterested, and of course it was neither. Moreover, with the confusion reigning in Moscow, the military high command in the capital and the local commanders in the field were given wide authority by default. On balance, however, Russian intervention helped to curb violence in South Ossetia and Transdniestria, and lower the level of violence drastically in Tajikistan (all in 1992). Russian politico-military mediation was also crucial in arranging a cease-fire in Karabakh, which has held without a peacekeeping force on the ground, since 1994. It was in Abkhazia that the Russian military really failed in their role as peacekeepers under the 1992 accord and helped the Abkhaz to defeat the Georgian forces and take over the entire province in 1993. Be that as it may, until the eruption of the first Chechen war in late 1994 all other seats of armed violence in the former USSR had been successfully contained by Russia.

The Russian actions had been legitimised at local level. The warring parties agreed, sometimes *ex post facto*, to Moscow's peacekeeping role. In South Ossetia, Transdniestria and Abkhazia, a so-called tripartite form of peacekeeping operation was first developed. The two parties to each conflict, and Russia established joint commissions to monitor cease-fire agreements, and fielded joint forces to police them.

When Russia intervened, it did so at its own behest. Moscow tried, and failed, to get the United Nations involved in any but a very minor role. It also predictably failed to gain international recognition as the sole power responsible for making peace across the CIS. The international community suspected that Russia had a secret agenda aimed at restoring its imperial control.<sup>2</sup> Although the UN had subsequently endorsed Russian peacekeeping, and sent its observers to some of the conflict areas, as had the OSCE, it never issued a mandate to Russia to operate on its behalf.

In this situation, Moscow sought the CIS mandate for the most difficult and controversial of its operations, in Abkhazia and Tajikistan. In the former case, the extension of the mandate has become one of the few instruments of pressure which the Georgian government can wield in Moscow, to make Russia toughen its stance *vis-à-vis* the Abkhaz. No other CIS country appears interested, and the issues of the CIS mandate and of the implementation of CIS resolutions have become part of complicated Russian-Georgian-Abkhazian relations.<sup>3</sup>

As has been referred to, the CIS has been helping former Soviet republics to become truly independent states over the years. As must be expected, independence to them means first and foremost independence from Russia. By the end of the decade, it has become evident that some of the new states were ready to assert themselves *vis-à-vis* Moscow.

The first Russian peacekeepers were regular forces who were never trained for such a mission. They intervened with force, either to impose a cease-fire, as in Moldova in June 1992, or to defeat and expel one of the warring factions, as in Tajikistan in December 1992. In one case (Abkhazia, 1993) during the political turmoil in Moscow, the Russian military commanders breached their obligations and helped the Abkhaz to prevail over Georgia. Progressively, Russian peacekeepers have become more professional. Russia's participation in the UNPROFOR, IFOR/SFOR and KFOR operations in the Balkans helped to gain expertise and develop a culture of modern Russian peacekeeping. Although peacekeeping within the CIS was regarded to be of an inferior order by the Russian soldiers themselves for a number of reasons, there has been some positive spillover effects.

Since the Russian government and the military have come to regard peacekeeping primarily as a tool of national policy, they sought to keep third parties out of the region. They were especially concerned by the prospect of having the Romanians on the ground in Moldova, the Turks in Azerbaijan, and NATO forces in Georgia.

## RESULTS ACHIEVED

The most immediate result of Russian intervention was the cessation of armed conflicts. Russia's forces were weak, but the antagonists were usually much weaker. Those in the West and elsewhere who had feared the restoration of the Russian empire by means of peacekeeping operations, were relieved, for Russian power and influence continued to decline, including in the countries that played host to Russian peacekeepers.

It also became possible to contain the geographic spread of violence. Had it been impossible to stabilise Tajikistan, however imperfectly, the neighbouring countries of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and probably Kazakstan would have been affected. A continuing conflict over Karabakh might have drawn in Turkey, provoking a direct conflict between this NATO country and Russia.

Violence was stopped and conflicts were contained, but political solutions were lacking. Except in Tajikistan where a peace agreement, jointly brokered by Moscow and Teheran, took effect in 1997, all conflicts were suspended and remained unresolved. From the mid-1990s, Moscow attempted to energise its peacekeeping diplomacy, but was too weak and too distracted to make the conflicting sides reach lasting agreements.

In contrast, more successful peace enforcement operations led by the US in Bosnia-Herzegovina changed the perception across the CIS area of the effectiveness of Russian peacekeeping. What had been seen as largely positive (cessation of violence) thus far, came to be viewed less charitably (no final settlement in sight, no funds for reconstruction made available).

Thus, as the decade drew to a close, violence has been stopped and political solutions are in the making, but the danger of conflicts resuming remains.

## POINTERS TO THE FUTURE

The first post-Soviet conflict to resume, was the one in Chechnya. No political solution was reached in the three years since the cease-fire had been agreed upon and Russian forces left the republic. The Chechens, for their part, have not been able to create a functioning state. Moreover, Chechnya has become the prime source of tension and instability in the region. The new conflict, instigated by what the Russian government has branded a terrorist organisation, is unlikely to end soon. As long as it lasts, it will absorb much of Russia's attention and resources. The outcome of the war in Chechnya will have decisive implications for many latent or simmering conflicts in the North Caucasus. Eventually, any solution will have to be a political one, but the role of outsiders is likely to be limited to the provision of humanitarian assistance, occasional short visits to the area, and remote monitoring of developments there. A return of the permanent OSCE presence as a facilitator of dialogue between Moscow and the Chechen authorities is improbable, except in the case of an unlikely Russian defeat.

Of the remaining conflicts, international mediation is moving the peace process in Nagorno-Karabakh forward. Crucial to this process is the combination of the political will of the participants to the conflict, the goodwill of mediators from the US, Russia, France and other countries assembled in the Minsk group, and the overall legitimacy conferred by the OSCE on the search for peace.

Slow progress toward settlement is also registered in Moldova, where Russia has insisted that its military withdrawal is conditional on the agreement on the final status of Transdniestria.

On the other hand, Abkhazia and South Ossetia are as far away from a peace accord as ever, due to the growing deterioration of Russian-Georgian relations.

Despite the 1997 peace agreement and the 1999 presidential elections in Tajikistan, the country remains a hotbed of tensions in the region. It is likely that, in the coming decade, it will function as a base for Islamic guerrillas aiming to topple the post-Soviet regimes of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and other states. In the absence of other credible protectors, these regimes will be turning to Moscow for

support and military aid. The outside pull for Russian involvement in Central Asian security will grow in the next decade. This involvement, however, can hardly be described as peacekeeping.

Should a new conflict break out in the CIS area, however, Russia will find it difficult, due to the lack of resources, to perform the role of a third-party peacekeeper. It will either need to co-operate with an international organisation, such as the UN or the OSCE, or enter into a coalition with others in the region. With reference to Central Asia, such a coalition could include countries in the region and China. Annual summits of five parties to the 1996 Shanghai border agreement can provide a useful framework for such contact.

The role of the CIS is likely to decline even further, as some of its members challenge Russia on the issue of peacekeeping, while others lose their last vestiges of interest in it. The very success of the CIS formula — turning the former Soviet republics into states — makes the Commonwealth itself increasingly irrelevant.

The regional organisations within the CIS area that do not include Russia, such as the Central Asian Union and the GUUAM (Georgia, the Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Moldova), are still too weak to be able to shoulder the burden of regional peacekeeping.

The role of the OSCE in the resolution of conflicts is likely to grow as Karabakh and Transdniestria edge towards a lasting peace accord.

The European Union, now complete with a common foreign and security policy, will probably seek to enhance its profile along the eastern periphery of the EU, which includes the CIS states.

NATO's new 'strategic concept' emphasises out-of-area activities. Even now, the mere spectre of NATO involvement as a peacemaker in the Caucasus raises fears in Moscow and encourages those in the area who view Russia as a threat. So far, NATO's strategy in this regard has been cautious, but consistent. Within the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, NATO has been engaged in training local peacekeepers in Central Asia (CENTRASBAT) and the Caucasus (for pipeline protection).

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM POST-SOVIET PEACEKEEPING

It has long been argued in the West that Russian peacekeeping offered few positive lessons, and certainly no model, to the outside world. This was based on the conclusion — an accurate one — that it differed too widely from the UN practice of peacekeeping. However, NATO's subsequent experience in Bosnia and especially in Kosovo sets limits on the utility of the UN model, discredited as it had been by the unfortunate UNPROFOR experience.

The Russian model of the early 1990s is not to be emulated by the Russians themselves, who, in Chechnya once again, are emulating various American tactics. Future military engagements in the CIS space are likely to follow a very different pattern from the regional separatism that has marked the 1990s. The states that have survived separation from the USSR relatively unscathed, will not be challenged by this type of conflict in the near future, and the cleft states will probably be somehow reconfigured to become federal/confederal structures. Most future conflicts will be of the kind now faced in the North Caucasus of which Kyrgyzstan also caught a glimpse in 1999. The established authority will be challenged by Islamic revolutionary plotters and rebels who will protest against the corruption of the upper classes and the utter poverty of the masses, and whose goal will be the creation of a Moslem state. Thus, the second Chechen war is the first major conflict of a new generation.

The post-Soviet experience shows that stopping violence through the use of force is crucial, but only a first step. Conflict resolution takes much time and effort, and requires substantial resources. In fact, very different types of qualities and resources are required for achieving a cease-fire, guaranteeing the implementation of agreements, and the resolution of a conflict. As elsewhere, the premium is on preventing conflicts or, should these break out nevertheless, on acting without delay, and sending in a military force quickly and in sufficient numbers.

The conflicts in the post-Soviet space reveal links between peacekeeping and geopolitics. In the absence of a world government with universal legitimacy, peacekeeping remains an instrument of the foreign policies of nations that have broader interests. Even if several of these nations act together as an international community, in the name of the norms and principles which they hold to be universal, their action can be *perceived* as geopolitically minded.

The former imperial power has both advantages and disadvantages when it decides to act. On the one hand, there is knowledge of the area and the players involved; geographical proximity; no language barriers; a surviving post-imperial infrastructure; a political clientele, and more. On the other hand, there is widespread suspicion of its ultimate goals; rejection of its role by significant segments of the population; the role played by former provincial lobbies in the former imperial capital; the undue influence of the military; political and ideological cleavages in society regarding intervention in the former borderlands, to name but a few.

When the international community is apathetic, the former imperial power is left alone to do all the work. Its resources are heavily taxed, but it is virtually unconstrained by outside meddling. The credibility of third-party peacemaking is limited, as it is virtually impossible for a former imperial power to stay impartial and disinterested. Even if it does not wholly support either party to a conflict, it can never be entirely neutral regarding its own national interests.

When the outside world becomes interested, geopolitical rivalry may be the result. At the very least, broader international involvement in handling conflicts within a former empire would aim at reducing the influence of the former dominant power. While the former hegemon may regard peacekeeping as a form of politico-military presence on the ground, the outsiders could politically gain from breaking that monopoly.

The parties directly involved in conflicts are very much prone to play geopolitical games. Thus, whereas Georgia and Moldova demand international peacekeeping with a strong Western presence, their separatist Abkhazian and Transdniestrian opponents prefer to rely on and attempt to *use* Russia.

International organisations such as the UN continue to play a legitimising role, but their role overall has become more limited. The Iraq and, in particular, Kosovo experiences have demonstrated that the Security Council is progressively paralysed as a result of mounting tensions between its permanent veto-wielding members Russia, China and the US. NATO's decision in the spring of 1999 to break the impasse and go ahead with its own, non-UN mandated military intervention in Yugoslavia has further undermined the UN role.<sup>4</sup> Yet, legitimacy is of key importance. There cannot be any effective resolution of conflicts without it.

Organising neighbourhood peacekeeping associations, as the CIS experience demonstrates, is fraught with difficulties rooted in history, psychology, diverging national interests, inequalities, leadership problems, lack of resources for proper functioning as a regional peacekeeping body, and much more. Despite these shortcomings, it is still preferable that one country single-handedly engages in regional peacekeeping than not at all.

## Endnotes

1. See the following Russian publications on this issue: V N Vartanov, V A Gavrilov & N Ya Shepova, *Mirotvorcheskie sily: oput sozdaniya i primemeniya v vooruzhennykh konfliktakh*, Institute of Military History, Moscow, 1996; A I Nikitin, O N Khlestov, Yu E Fedorov & A V Demurenko, *Mirotvorcheskie operatsii v SNG, MONF*, Moscow, 1998.
2. See, for example, L Jonson, *Keeping the peace in the CIS*, Discussion Paper 81, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1999, p 1.
3. See the following: R Allison, *Peacekeeping in the Soviet successor states*, Chaillot Paper 18, Institute for Security Studies of the WEU, Paris, 1994; H G Ehrhart, A Kriekemeyer & S Zagorsky (eds), *Crisis management in the CIS: Whither Russia?* Nomos Verlag, Baden-Baden, 1995; L Jonson & C Archer (eds), *Peacekeeping and the role of Russia in Eurasia*,

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4. For an analysis of Russian views of the Kosovo conflict, and its impact on the international system, see D Trenin & E Stepanova (eds), *Kosovo: mezhdunarodnye aspekty krizisa* (Kosovo: International aspects of the crisis), Carnegie Moscow Center, Moscow, 1999.

# Conflict Management in Africa: The Role of the OAU and Sub-regional Organisations

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*Funmi Olonisakin, African Security Unit, Centre for Defence Studies, King's College, London*

## INTRODUCTION

Indigenous members of any group or society have certain core values that they seek to protect, which outsiders to their system may not always share, and specific privileges that those regarded as 'foreigners' in their midst cannot take for granted. Yet, sometimes, the very fact that some are outsiders to such a system may grant them immunity from certain practices that the natives cannot easily escape, or may make outsiders better suited to perform certain roles. For example, people from outside an environment may be judged to be better mediators or interlocutors simply because they are not perceived to be stakeholders in the society. These contradictory tendencies are at the core of the challenges faced by regional and subregional actors, whether single states, a group of states or organisations, seeking to manage conflict in their region or natural backyard.

Regional and subregional organisations tend to have specific advantages over actors from outside these regions. They often have a greater interest (than external actors) in the affairs of their neighbourhoods, and a desire to manage conflict in their regions. It is unlikely, for example, that member states of the Organisation of the American States (OAS) would have a deeper interest in the resolution of conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia or in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), than the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) or other African subregional organisations. This is particularly the case in a post-Cold War era, where many states no longer have strategic importance for other countries or regional alliances. Thus, it is arguable that political will would be easier to muster among regional actors if and when the need arises for local conflict management. A second crucial advantage that regional and subregional actors possess, is that they often have a superior knowledge of their regions, the prevailing cultures, the peoples, and their idiosyncrasies. This factor becomes all the more important in conflict situations where an interlocutor's understanding of the people, as well as the issues contained in the conflict will often go a long way to determine the success of their action.

However, within these strengths lie the inherent weaknesses of regional actors. They will not always be objective, neutral and impartial, given that they may have vested interests in the resolution or course of a conflict in their neighbourhood. This is almost always true of individual or group actors, whether they are acting alone or under the umbrella of an organisation. As a result, their credibility may be in question, when they respond to conflict or crises in their backyard.

One factor that may not be common to all regional actors or organisations, is that they sometimes do not have sufficient clout to make so-called 'side payments' to conflict actors. It is likely that the bigger or richer an organisation or its leadership, the greater will be its chances to overcome this problem. The OAS, for example, could easily overcome this problem in cases where the lead nation, the United States, has an interest in the outcome of a conflict in its backyard, thus underwriting much of the costs of the settlement. The US was the only nation able to do this with a measure of success, when attempts at reviving the peace process in the Middle-East began in earnest in the early 1990s. This is one of the few post-Cold War situations where the conflict in a region holds enormous interest for

states outside of the region. In this case, the US was seen as a credible mediator and it was able to offer side payments to the conflicting parties in the form of promises to underwrite some of the costs that will naturally result from implementing a settlement.

Lastly, there is some legal restriction on the type of conflict resolution activity that regional and subregional organisations can embark on. In efforts to manage or control conflicts or prevent their escalation to more dangerous and violent levels, it may become necessary to use or threatens to use force. In such a case, the UN Charter places a limit on the role of regional actors. Except in cases of self-defence, regional actors must seek the approval of the UN Security Council before embarking on the use of force.

This article discusses the experience of African regional and subregional organisations in the management of conflict on the continent. In particular, it assesses the kinds of challenges that these organisations are required to deal with in the current international political climate and the factors that influence their ability to respond effectively to these challenges. In doing so, it relies on the experience of organisations whose recent activities reflect some of the challenges highlighted. The idea is not to go over the roles of different regional organisations with a fine-tooth comb. Rather, the themes or issues that have emanated from the different efforts to resolve or manage conflict on the continent will be the focus of attention. In the bid to tease out many of these issues, the experiences of some organisations are likely to receive greater prominence than others.

## AFRICAN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The extent of the conflict and security issues that African regional organisations would have to deal with has become more apparent over the past decade. The 'peaceful new world order that was predicted after the fall of the Berlin Wall did not evolve so peacefully in Africa. In an atmosphere of old authoritarian regimes, which had survived through coercive extraction of resources and the oppression of their people with the firm backing of either bloc of a bipolar world, the withdrawal of this support meant that opposition to these regimes could now thrive.

In all but five sub-Saharan African countries, civilian authoritarian regimes, military rule or other forms of oppressive systems prevailed and, as a result of this, legitimate demands by several groups within these states were ignored, giving rise to unresolved conflicts. In the period immediately following the end of the Cold War, those leaders who were vigilant and forward-looking had accurately predicted the consequences of the changes in the international political climate. They quickly sought to put more representative forms of government in place. This was the case, for example, in the Republic of Benin, where Kerekou subjected himself to multiparty elections. In Mali, Musa Traore, after 23 years in power, was ejected by the military that, in turn, staged multiparty elections. In South Africa, a change in the stance of the old guard led to majority rule in 1994. In those states where leaders did not heed the warnings, violent conflicts erupted that, in some cases, brought the state to the verge of collapse resulting in humanitarian crises of mammoth proportions.

Almost all of the conflicts that occurred in Africa at different stages, required early warning and early action in terms of the use of mediation, conciliation and good offices. In some cases, preventive deployment would have been required in support of diplomatic efforts. Because Africa no longer had a strategic relevance to the great powers, many of the African conflicts that found free expression in a post-Cold War dispensation did not enjoy extra-African responses, and escalated freely in the absence of superpower rivalry. The great powers were no longer prepared to intervene in African conflicts. If any intervention or resolution attempts would occur, they had to come from within the continent.

A distinction must be made between those conflicts that became apparent as a result of post-Cold War changes, and those that had existed prior to these changes and, in some cases, had been fuelled by the Cold War. In cases of pre-existing conflicts in South Africa — Namibia, Mozambique and Angola (initially) — the withdrawal of superpower rivalry from these areas created an atmosphere conducive to resolution efforts. The UN (in Mozambique and Angola), and the Commonwealth (in the case of Namibia where peace efforts had slowly begun before the fall of the Berlin Wall), played active roles in the resolution of these conflicts. Angola would later suffer a reversal as the election results were rejected by one of the warring parties. Many of these conflicts were easily amenable to traditional

forms of conflict resolution — diplomacy supported by traditional peacekeeping operations, where necessary. In terms of emerging conflicts (e.g. in Liberia), which escalated rapidly, exhibited vicious characteristics and were resistant to traditional conflict resolution strategies, the UN and other extra-African actors did not wish to play any role. This was especially the case after the intervention in Somalia led by the US. The onus would have to be on Africans to provide an effective method of managing or resolving these vicious conflicts.

Once these conflicts escalated, they required a corresponding escalation in response strategies. For example, a strong force (in terms of manpower and equipment) would have been required to halt the atrocities committed against innocent civilians in Liberia and Somalia, and the genocide in Rwanda/Burundi. In Somalia, where a strong force was deployed, the strategies employed were ineffective until the real nature of the conflicting parties became apparent — and the US-led force was severely punished for this. Thereafter, the world outside Africa looked on and crises escalated. Countries in far regions became unwilling to commit manpower and materiel to conflicts in Africa that had no bearing on their national interest.

The reality confronting Africa was that, unless the conflicts that had pervaded different subregions of the continent were resolved, there would be no hope for the lofty goals of economic integration, development and prosperity. It was impossible to achieve such growth in an atmosphere of instability. In each subregion, countries that are not experiencing civil war are dealing with the consequences of wars in neighbouring states in different ways. One manifestation of this is the influx of refugees. In extreme cases, the neighbour's state is destabilised through border incursions (for example, resulting in civil war in the case of Sierra Leone). This experience is true for West, Central and Southern Africa.

Thus, conflict situations and security threats confronting African countries and requiring the active efforts of African regional and subregional organisations show three main dimensions. Firstly, brewing internal conflicts that have not experienced violent manifestations, are usually the result of long-term authoritarian rule, a denial of citizens' human rights, and a lack of popular participation in politics and governance, among others. Secondly, internal conflicts have been waged that have rapidly escalated into crises, humanitarian disasters and state collapse in some cases, as witnessed in Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Somalia. Thirdly, lingering border disputes between states have arisen, as is the case between Cameroon and Nigeria, Eritrea and Ethiopia, and Botswana and Namibia.

Managing these conflicts requires responses at several points on a continuum, with diplomacy, mediation and the preventive deployment of troops on one end, and variations of peacekeeping, peace support and the outright use of force on the other end. Restricting responses to the one end of this spectrum would often require the effective use of early warning mechanisms. Thus, it would perhaps be possible to deal with many conflict situations proactively and timely before they escalate to violent levels, which create greater difficulty for third-party actors. However, much will depend not just on the willingness of regional and subregional organisations to manage or resolve these conflicts, but also on their ability to do so effectively.

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES FOR AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS

Africa was not prepared in the early 1990s for the responsibility that was thrust upon it. The principles upon which many organisations in the region were founded, were no longer relevant, nor were they sufficient to meet the post-Cold War security needs of the continent. The OAU, for example, was founded on the principles of 'sovereignty' and 'pan-Africanism' that, at the time of its inception, appeared to be the logical reaction to Africa's colonial past. If states were to retain their independence and maintain stability successfully, these principles appeared to be crucial. However, the natural tension between sovereignty, which stipulated non-interference in the affairs of member states, and pan-Africanism, which implied the submission of some sovereignty to a supranational authority, appeared to have been resolved in favour of the former. The aftermath was the proliferation of autocratic leaders, who substituted state security and interest for regime security and self-interest. The OAU's preference for sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of member states rendered it powerless to address situations of poor governance and the abuse of human rights within many member states that threatened to erupt into violent conflict in some cases.

At the subregional level, there are several organisations whose main purpose at formation did not centre around conflict resolution and management. Among the most prominent of the subregional organisations are the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), and *L'accord de non-aggression et d'assistance en matière de défense* (L'ANAD).<sup>1</sup> Apart from L'ANAD, which was created especially for purposes of security management, others have evolved (albeit at different paces) into security and conflict management institutions. In the case of ECOWAS, the organisation was founded primarily for purposes of economic integration, while SADC evolved from a political alliance against apartheid, to an organisation later aspiring to economic co-operation. The Maghreb Union was founded to promote Arab unity, while IGAD's focus was on development in north-east Africa, where it has gradually taken on the role of promoting peace and security, particularly in Sudan and Somalia.<sup>2</sup> Having eventually come to the realisation that the great powers were no longer strategically interested in Africa and as a result would not come to Africa's rescue, African organisations gradually began to take responsibility for the resolution of their conflicts, albeit at various levels.

## THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

In the immediate post-Cold War period, the OAU was still firmly rooted in its ideal to protect state sovereignty and its unwillingness to intervene in the internal conflicts of member states. Yet, many of the conflicts that Africans were trying to deal with were internal and deadly. They also threatened to destabilise neighbouring states. Its stance on sovereignty was perhaps the main weakness of the OAU when it came to conflict management, and one that threatened to render the organisation irrelevant in the new international environment. Indeed, the organisation's earlier stance in countries like Mozambique, meant that it had little relevance to the resolution of the conflict in the country. The OAU would soon realise that its political stance did not suit the post-Cold War climate. It thus slackened its approach, admitting that sovereignty could no longer be seen as absolute.

The OAU has now assumed greater responsibility for conflict management on the continent. At the 1993 OAU Summit in Cairo, the OAU Central Organ and the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution were established (further referred to as the Mechanism). Although the OAU principle of non-interference in internal affairs was restated, the Mechanism was also charged with the task of dealing with internal conflicts in the region. Prior to the establishment of the Mechanism, the OAU had created a Division of Conflict Management in 1992, with its own budget within the Secretariat. Overall, there has been optimism that the Mechanism will fare much better than the OAU Commission on Mediation, Reconciliation and Arbitration, which was established in the 1960s and was expected to be the organisation's main instrument for conflict management. However, the Commission appeared to have been doomed from the start, as it did not address the practical realities of the region.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, its lengthy and costly judicial process made the Commission unattractive to many member states. The Commission was dissolved in 1977, with the OAU opting for other methods of conflict management, such as the use of good offices.

Indeed, the establishment of the Mechanism is an attempt by the OAU to shift from an *ad hoc* to a 'systematic' approach to conflict resolution.<sup>4</sup> At the core of the Mechanism is the understanding that, while early warning and conflict prevention lie at the heart of the OAU's conflict management objectives, there may be a need for peacekeeping and peacebuilding in situations where conflicts are already present. This is a clear indication of the organisation's attempts to make itself relevant to the post-Cold War realities on the African continent. Evidence of this have been found in its response to the events in Rwanda and Burundi, among several other gestures.

In Rwanda, the OAU played a prominent role in efforts to reach a settlement between the government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). This was initially done through mediation efforts between 1990 and 1992, of which the end result was the establishment of an OAU observer force to monitor the cease-fire. The OAU was also active in the Arusha peace process in 1993. The OAU force was reluctantly evacuated in 1994, when the much larger UN force left the scene — revealing one of the main weaknesses of the organisation: that even when it is willing, it may not have the capacity to act. In Burundi, the OAU also deployed an observer mission in 1994 and appointed a special envoy to the country. The mission was terminated, following the *coup* of July 1996.<sup>5</sup> The subsequent institution of

sanctions against Buyoya's military regime was a clear indication that the OAU had turned a corner in its approach to conflict management on the continent.

The OAU, however, is still plagued by old problems, some of which relate to the interests of its leaders, and others which are the natural consequences of managing an organisation of this magnitude. Although the idea that the organisation is a club of corrupt and autocratic leaders is gradually dissipating — given the emergence of more democratically inclined states — it is still possible for the personal interests of some leaders to affect their response to certain conflict situations. It was often thought that non-democratic leaders would find it difficult to oppose the internal conduct of another state whose rulers violate the human rights of the citizens. Additionally, even if all countries were to imbibe democratic practices, it is difficult to achieve consensus in an organisation consisting of 53 member states, where each country has its own interests and its security priorities might be different from the next — and this is bound to affect the way it responds to conflict or crisis in another member state. The best that can be achieved under the circumstances is that security regimes will emerge in each subregion — it is likely that groups of states that share borders and the same security concerns will evolve somewhat similar methods of addressing their security needs, including their responses to conflict or impending or actual crises in the subregion.

Although the OAU is reviewing its overall approach to regional conflicts and security, its previous (Cold War) and more recent experiences still provide some pointers on how the organisation can approach conflict resolution. The OAU is best equipped to respond to a conflict before it escalates to violent or crisis levels. Its experience in Chad gives an indication of the kind of problems it could encounter in big operations. However, its response in Rwanda and later in Burundi is an indication of some of the strengths of the OAU. These are found in early warning, mediation, good offices, collective political sanction and preventive deployment — for most of these the organisation can get consensus and can perhaps manage them financially. The OAU is keenly aware, however, of its own limitations and, as a result, readily gives its blessing to subregional organisations that are willing and able to provide higher levels of response to conflicts that have escalated beyond the capacity of the OAU, including humanitarian disasters.

## SUBREGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Some subregions could not enjoy the 'luxury' of gradually evolving their conflict management systems. They were compelled to develop their systems to deal with events that were thrust upon them. This was the case with ECOWAS when it was confronted by the crisis in Liberia in 1990, a few months after the conflict began and had rapidly escalated. The ECOWAS response to Liberia was initiated by Nigeria (at an ECOWAS Summit in May 1990) through the creation of the Standing Mediation Committee (SMC), for reasons that many observers argue, were far from altruistic on the part of President Babangida. With hindsight, however, it is doubtful that the organisation could have stood by and watched Liberia degenerate to the kind of situation later seen in Rwanda. Nonetheless, ECOWAS dispatched a peace force to Liberia in August 1990 to intervene in the country's crisis. The organisation also put forward a peace plan. After seven years of mixed results and alternating between peacekeeping and peace enforcement, the second Abuja accord led to the staging of elections in Liberia, in which the leader of the main warring faction (Charles Taylor) emerged victorious. The remaining troops from the ECOMOG force (who were guarding the weapons collected from the disarmament phase) left Liberia in October 1999 — nearly a decade after the outbreak of war, and after more than nine years of ECOMOG operations in the country.

### What conflict resolution assets did ECOWAS have prior to the 1990 intervention in Liberia?

There was no peacekeeping precedent in the West African subregion, apart from the brief interpositional experience of L'ANAD in 1985. In terms of responding to a complex, political and humanitarian emergency, West Africa could not draw on prior experience. Even the OAU experience in Chad still fell short of this. Nonetheless, several West African countries had contributed troops to UN operations and had mostly experienced traditional peacekeeping. However, within ECOWAS there had been, for some time, a recognition that there could not be economic integration and prosperity

without stability. It was this thinking that led to the protocols on non-aggression (1978) and mutual assistance in defence, 1981.

Even so, the security threat facing the subregion was perceived to be largely external. Much thought was not given to the need to prevent internal security threats or the escalation of internal conflicts, through a change in the system of governance and the use of accountability, rule of law and respect for citizens' human rights as conflict prevention strategies. It is not surprising that West African leaders did not (officially) give much thought to this, as more than two-thirds of the sixteen member states of ECOWAS were under dictatorial or authoritarian regimes. They therefore missed the opportunities for early warning, conflict prevention or avoidance, or indeed early mediation. Thus, when Liberia was flung upon ECOWAS, it had to improvise in many respects. Indeed, its experience in Liberia, over time illustrated many of the problems that confront subregional organisations in conflict resolution.

## PRACTICAL PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

### Structural

Subregional economic organisations, founded for economic and development purposes, are now required to play significant conflict management roles. The countries in the region can ill-afford the costs of erecting other organisations for the sole purpose of conflict resolution. Thus, the existing organisations, albeit with original purposes other than conflict management and resolution, have had to respond to the conflict situations around them. They have done this at different levels and with varying degrees of success. One of the issues that have become apparent is that the structures of many of these organisations are unsuited for the conflict management roles they have assumed. As an organisation's level of response develops along the continuum discussed above, the structural problems become more difficult to manage. For example, when the response to a conflict situation is at the level of mediation and other diplomatic activities, such structural problems are less noticeable than when a major peacekeeping or enforcement operation has been initiated.

ECOWAS, for example, was without a section such as the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO), and this invariably affected its ability to co-ordinate the ECOMOG operations effectively. The problem was recognised by the organisation and in its new treaty, and through its new Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, such structural flaws have been given greater attention. SADC has had more time to put a structure in place. On paper, it seems to have the structural tools to manage regional operations. However, its Organ on Politics, Defence and Security was, until recently, the subject of disagreement between Zimbabwe and South Africa.

### Political divisions and partiality

One of the main issues that have emerged — particularly in a post-Cold War situation where countries within a region or subregion only are willing to resolve crises in their own neighbourhoods — is that it is difficult to find neutral and impartial actors. This has been apparent in Liberia and the DRC. In Liberia in 1990, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso were seen to be supporting different sides in the conflict. This invariably impacted on the ECOMOG operation, when one of the conflicting parties perceived Nigeria as a partial actor. The other two did not participate in the peace operation at the time. This issue also created political divisions within ECOWAS and served to emphasise old Anglophone and Francophone rivalries.

### Human and financial resources

Perhaps the most serious problem that regional and subregional organisations face, is the dire lack of resources to meet the challenges presented by escalating regional conflicts. Many organisations cannot mount a straightforward and predictable traditional peacekeeping operation, let alone the more complex peace support operations that are required to bring stability to the present conflict areas. Thus, regional or subregional organisations are more likely to respond to conflicts when there is a lead nation — a country with the human and material resources to take the lead in the initiation of such

operations. For example, even where smaller, less endowed states are willing, they may not have the human resources to conduct the kind of operations that would normally be required to manage difficult conflicts. In 1990, prior to ECOMOG's deployment in Liberia, some countries did not have enough senior ranking soldiers to contribute to the force. The need for bigger and richer states to contribute to peace support interventions may create another problem — what is sometimes seen as the problem of regional hegemony, which is discussed below.

## Regional hegemons

These powerful actors are considered to be a 'necessary evil' in many regions. On the one hand, smaller states are reluctant to accept the leadership of bigger and better endowed states for fear that they will always seek hegemony in their neighbourhood. On the other hand, these big states are relied upon in times of conflict to provide the resources that produce the vital lifeline of peace operations. Thus, countries like Nigeria in ECOWAS and South African in SADC may find themselves challenged to take a leading role in their regions in times of crisis. Both countries, thus far, appear to have responded differently to the challenges confronting them. While Nigeria has whole-heartedly accepted the leading role in the West African subregion, the opposite has tended to be the case with South Africa, which is reluctant to play the role of 'superpower' in Southern Africa. Where hegemons are willing and able to initiate and participate in regional conflict resolution efforts, these may mean the difference between *arrested collapse* and complete destruction, human suffering and anarchy. Subregions without such lead nations are the ones likely to suffer more in times of crisis, especially where no power outside the neighbourhood is willing and able to intervene. The harm that might have been prevented in Rwanda, had there been an actor willing and able to act 'quickly' in response to the situation on the ground can only be left to the imagination.

Despite their advantages, however, regional hegemons may themselves become stumbling blocks in a conflict resolution process if they are seen as being partial, as having too much vested interest in the conflict, or indeed, if they are not inclusive in their approach. Nigeria faced deep suspicions from a combination of some ECOWAS member states and one of the conflicting parties in Liberia, for various reasons. Most of all, however, the greatest challenge that Nigeria faced, was the perception of partiality.

## Legitimacy and legal relationship with the UN

Regional organisations face a problem of legitimacy if they are perceived to be acting without the approval of the UN, particularly where the action entails the use of force. The ECOMOG operation initially suffered when its legitimacy was challenged on a number of levels. The operation only received the blessing of the UN retroactively. However, there has been a shift in thinking in recent years. In difficult humanitarian emergencies, action has been taken unilaterally or collectively by a group of states that then receive approval retroactively from the UN. Thus, some analysts are already raising questions whether this reflects emerging customary international law.

## Operational problems

In responding to deadly conflict in subregions, local peacemakers have encountered specific operational problems. African organisations and their representatives are often required to bring about peace in environments where the conflicting parties are barely identifiable and numerous, and where the control of territories occupied by them is constantly changing hands. The force that is mandated to create stability in such an environment has to struggle with the differences in orientation among the different contingents in the multinational force. Such differences range from training and doctrine, to the provision of logistic support and language. Thus, ECOMOG commanders had to contend with language barriers, the effects of differences in training and doctrine between Francophone and Anglophone, and even among the Anglophone continents, and the irregular provision of logistics, including variations in the amounts of operational allowance.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

There can be no doubt that many challenges must be met if regional and subregional conflict management mechanisms in Africa are to function well. Firstly, there is a need for improved co-ordination between the OAU and subregional organisations so that peace efforts could be given timely and effective support at both levels. This must include a common conception of the responses to different types of conflict situations and the commitment to the implementation of peace plans. Any organisation, whether regional or subregional, requires a high level of cohesion and such cohesion, in turn, must exist in any joint effort between the OAU and the subregions.

Secondly, greater effort must be made to increase the channels of communication between the OAU and African civil society, and between subregional organisations and civil society in their own neighbourhoods. This will form the key in evolving an early warning and prevention system. African organisations have already embarked on a process of dealing with their conflict management and security problems. Their various experiences at meeting the different challenges can only take them on the road to improvement.

## Endnotes

1. Agreement on non-aggression and assistance in defence.
2. Indeed, IGAD began as an attempt to fight the consequences of drought and desertification in East Africa.
3. On the conflict management experience of the OAU during the Cold War, see for example, A Sesay, 'Regional and sub-regional conflict management efforts', in S Akinrinade & A Sesay (eds), *Africa in the post-Cold War international system*, Pinter, London, 1998.
4. See the *Report of the Cairo Consultation on the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution*, Cairo, Egypt, May 1994, p 19.
5. For more on these OAU peacemaking efforts, see *Report of the Joint OAU/IPA Task Force on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping in Africa*, March 1998.

# ECOMOG: A model for Africa?

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*Comfort Ero, Centre for Defence Studies, King's College, London*

## INTRODUCTION

Since its intervention in Liberia on 25 August 1990, ECOMOG — the Monitoring Observer Group of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) — has entered other trouble spots along the West African coastline, notably Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. Although ECOMOG encountered several difficulties, as will be discussed below, it has been labelled a prototype or future model for African peacekeeping by some within and outside Africa. Not since the attempt by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to set up an Inter-African Force for Chad in 1981 had a peacekeeping force been established on the continent to respond to internal conflicts. The OAU had tried, on several occasions, to create an indigenous body that could police Africa's wars, but has been unable to obtain consensus from its member states. It is therefore no surprise that one of ECOMOG's strongest supporters is the OAU.

Similarly, the United Nations and the major powers (Britain, France and the United States), growing wary of intervening in regional conflicts, see ECOMOG as a possible model that could be replicated throughout Africa, hence, the variety of declarations to build the peacekeeping capacity of ECOWAS member states. ECOMOG not only provides an answer to those Africans who want Africans to find solutions to their own problems, but it serves the interests of those in search of another body to respond to conflicts in areas not necessarily with strategic impact, but with large-scale and tragic humanitarian crises. Yet, this article asks: Is ECOMOG a model for Africa? Should it or can it be replicated in other regions of the continent?

There is a fundamental question about developing an institutional approach to conflicts in Africa that needs to be addressed seriously. After nine years of responding to crises in West Africa, ECOWAS is still struggling to find a collective security system that ensures that all member states act in concert when responding to conflicts in the region. Each operation by ECOMOG has not seen a substantial improvement on its previous attempt, nor any credible peace left in the countries it entered. Rather, ECOMOG stumbled from pursuing aggressive military tactics in Liberia to collaborating with mercenaries in Sierra Leone to enforce peace and finally, to mandating a force that did not have the capacity to respond to a complex internal conflict in Guinea-Bissau. In all three cases, one shortcoming seemed glaringly obvious: West African heads of state had not established any guidelines, principles or rules of engagement for managing internal conflicts. Instead, ECOMOG operated on an ad hoc basis, allowing states either to exploit its weakness (e.g. Nigeria), or use war and instability as a means of expropriating the resources of another country (e.g. Liberia). With such evidence stacked against it, how can ECOMOG serve as a model for Africa?

This article argues that a major challenge facing ECOWAS and the rest of Africa is that not all states are willing to work together or within institutions to ensure a regional response to conflicts. Rather, a significant trend is to 'go it alone' where the geostrategic interests of one state is threatened by the internal politics of another state. It is partly for this reason that the main conclusion of this article is that proponents of ECOMOG need to treat the argument with caution that it can serve as a model for conflict management in Africa and even in West Africa where it faces several challenges.

## ECOMOG AND THE EVOLUTION OF AFRICA'S SECURITY SYSTEM

When ECOMOG intervened on three occasions in West Africa, the international community witnessed a major evolution in inter-African affairs. Several African states were devising a collective system or capacity to respond to conflicts rather than relying on an outside force like the UN to intervene. The interventions by ECOMOG marked an important turning point in the practice of peacekeeping by regional or subregional organisations. Its importance also lies in the fact that it has reignited an old debate within Africa about the creation of a continental capacity to respond to matters related to peace and instability. The idea of an African peacekeeping force to manage African conflicts was first proposed by President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana when the OAU was created in 1963. Since then, several unsuccessful attempts have been made to create a body that could tackle conflicts on the continent.

The OAU Inter-African Force, set up in 1981 to monitor the civil war in Chad, was the first practical example of inter-African co-operation in the field of peacekeeping, but it ended in failure. Inadequate planning, confusion over the mandate, absence of an OAU command and control structure, the perceived partiality of some troop-contributing countries, minimal financial and logistic resources and, above all, the lack of political will, not just of the parties to the conflict, but also of third-party mediators in the surrounding region, contributed to the failure of the first attempt by the OAU to deploy a peacekeeping force on the continent.

The intervention by ECOMOG in Liberia therefore represented a watershed in African collective security by a regional or subregional body. The states of West Africa embarked on a journey that would eventually lead them to intervene in the internal affairs of three member states, but more importantly, to develop various frameworks for enhancing the capacity of regional states to mount a peacekeeping force. The ECOMOG intervention in Liberia preceded many of the changes and initiatives that were taking place at the OAU.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the efforts made by ECOWAS gained influence on the African continent, especially within the OAU, which has long argued for an African capacity to manage the continent's conflict.

Between 1991-1993, the OAU Secretary General, Salim Ahmed Salim began to draw up proposals for a continental peacekeeping force that was not much different from ECOMOG. The debates within the OAU on conflict management capacity and how to build a response mechanism reflected the issues that ECOWAS had grappled with when it mandated the ECOMOG mission to Liberia. Other regional bodies like the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), have drawn on the examples and experience of ECOWAS to create a security apparatus within their regions. These subregions were developed primarily to promote economic and political co-operation. The idea that they might play a military or security role is quite novel. African leaders, in the 1990s, were seemingly prepared not only to build security apparatus within these subregional entities, but to operationalise the capacity of these bodies to intervene in regional disputes. Thus, in 1994, SADC member states took the decisive step of playing the role of peacemakers in Lesotho when hostilities broke out between King Letsie III and the Prime Minister, Ntsu Mokhehle and the elected Parliament. The impact of ECOMOG can also be seen in a news briefing given by the Ugandan Defence minister, Stephen Kavuma to the UK defence magazine, *Jane's Defence Weekly* in May 1999. Kavuma predicted that the EAC would have a regional peacekeeping force with joint command structures within three years. Stemming from discussions with Tanzania and Kenya, Kavuma stated that he would like members of the EAC to focus, as ECOMOG has been doing for several years, on developing common standards for military training in national armies.<sup>2</sup> With other regions in Africa using the ECOMOG model, the idea inspired by Kwame Nkrumah and the pan-Africanists of yesteryear was finally being fulfilled.

## A HISTORY OF ECOMOG INTERVENTIONS ON THE WEST AFRICAN COASTLINE

Several events in the nine years since ECOWAS created an intervention force to tackle instability in West Africa, suggest that it should be seen as a model for the rest of Africa. That a body created in 1975 for the purpose of enhancing economic and political co-operation could transform itself into a

security apparatus for its entire region should certainly be hailed as innovative and a significant evolution in the thinking of African states. The complex web of regional relations, the history of claims and counterclaims that one state was trying to destabilise another state, plus the lack of consensus over political and economic progress, should have meant that ECOWAS was not a candidate for conversion to the management of security issues. However, since entering Liberia in August 1990, ECOWAS has tried to transform and expand its mandate from political and economic matters to that of managing, resolving and preventing conflicts.

With the spiral of conflicts emerging in the region and the changing international environment, the case has been successfully made by prominent member states of ECOWAS that the region needed to set up a mechanism for managing regional security. When it appeared that the international community would not sanction peacekeepers for the Liberian conflict, Nigeria — the dominant regional power in West Africa — won the argument for creating an indigenous security apparatus to oversee the conflict. At various ECOWAS summits, Nigeria garnered support for building a regional security framework. The first major step came with the revision of the ECOWAS treaty and protocols in 1993 which made provision for maintaining 'regional peace and security'.<sup>3</sup> Since then, member states have agreed, in principle, to set up formal mechanisms to respond to conflicts in West Africa and to establish structures that would allow ECOMOG to function as a security apparatus for the region. Significantly, in October 1998, member states endorsed the draft framework of West African ministers of Defence for an 'ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security' with the objective of arming ECOWAS with the capacity to standardise its operations in managing conflicts in the region.

Events that took place on the ground also suggest that ECOMOG should be a model for Africa. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, for example, the state had either collapsed or was failing, and various armed opposition groups challenged their central authorities. The widespread displacement of civilians, plus the flow of refugees into neighbouring countries not only posed a humanitarian challenge for ECOMOG, but also threatened its attempts to prevent regional instability. In Sierra Leone, for example, more than a million persons had been displaced and at least 300 000 refugees had fled to Guinea. As rebel groups frequently crossed borders and used neighbouring states as launchpads for their insurgency, ECOMOG also found itself responding to instability on various borders: Sierra Leone-Liberia, Guinea-Liberia, Guinea-Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau-Senegal. It was partly due to the impact of ECOMOG that West Africa did not see the outbreak of regional interstate conflicts. There were various accusations that could have exploded into full-scale fighting between member states, for example, when President Kabbah of Sierra Leone accused President Charles Taylor of assisting and training the main Sierra Leone rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). However, through a mixture of force and diplomacy by ECOMOG and ECOWAS member states, interstate conflicts were avoided. In fact, during its nine years, ECOMOG widened its task of managing internal conflict to that of monitoring crossborder clashes and preventing the possibilities of regional conflicts. It had emerged, in many ways, as a security umbrella ready and willing to manage violence in the region.

On an operational level, the interventions in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau exposed the military capabilities of troop-contributing states in ECOMOG to launch peace enforcement strategies. ECOMOG encountered numerous problems during its operations ranging from inadequate structures for rapid deployment from troop-contributing countries, problems in the areas of command, control, organisation, logistics and co-ordination, harmonisation of tactics and problems of force projection.<sup>4</sup> In all three interventions, poorer troop-contributing countries relied heavily on Nigeria's military capacity, but even Nigeria found itself challenged in providing airlift capability to launch and sustain its troops across various borders. Yet, despite these operational dilemmas, ECOMOG continued to extend itself across West Africa and, in doing so, improvised and shifted its operations between peacekeeping and peace enforcement strategies. After its first intervention, ECOMOG Chiefs of Staff worked hard to increase co-ordination, standardisation, and regional military training among national armies. Various meetings also focused on operational shortcomings in terms of command and control, force composition and troop deployment.

The experience of ECOMOG has opened possibilities for other regions to pursue mechanisms and structures to manage conflicts. However, in an analysis of ECOMOG operations in the West African region, the following three sections raise doubts whether ECOMOG can or should be a model for the rest of Africa. The sections argue that, in the process of responding to conflicts in their region, several

states pursued aggressive strategies that eventually prolonged and widened conflicts, thus challenging the assertion that ECOMOG should be a model for Africa.

## ECOMOG in Liberia: Regional sensitivities and aggressive military tactics

Under the auspices of the Standing Mediation Committee set up to respond to Liberia, a total of 2 700 troops from Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea entered Monrovia, the capital of Liberia on 25 August 1990. The Liberian civil war began on Christmas Eve 1989, when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by its rebel leader, Charles Taylor, invaded the country from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. The purpose, according to Taylor, was to end the brutal regime of Liberia's head of state, Samuel Doe. The armed incursion soon degenerated into carnage and the massacre of civilians as fighting broke out between the NPFL and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) that consisted mainly of Doe's ethnic group, the Krahn. The NPFL soon controlled most of the Liberian territory. Over seven years, four other warring factions emerged to contest power and territory in Liberia's civil war.<sup>5</sup>

The ECOMOG mandate in Liberia was *"to conduct military operations for the purpose of monitoring the ceasefire"* and restore *"law and order to create the necessary conditions for free and fair elections."*<sup>6</sup> ECOMOG, however, soon found its mandate complicated by the violent and brutal capacity of the warring factions. Not long after its deployment, ECOMOG shifted from being a peacekeeper to perform peace enforcement tasks. ECOMOG found itself embroiled in a war with the NPFL, inevitably compromising any supposed neutrality that a peacekeeping force might have. In the process of purportedly attempting to interpose itself between various warring factions to keep the peace, ECOMOG supported and armed other rivals of Charles Taylor. Of the troops that intervened under the auspices of ECOMOG, Nigerian troops were seen as notorious for their aggressive military campaign against Taylor. In fact, the whole story of ECOMOG in Liberia is bound by the open desire of Nigeria to challenge, dominate and dictate the outcome of the conflict, but more importantly, to prevent Taylor from seizing power in Liberia. The tactics employed by Nigeria backfired, resulting in major clashes between ECOMOG and the NPFL and substantially prolonging and widening the conflict.

It is thus possible to argue that Nigeria, with the support of regional allies, used ECOMOG not for the stated objective of maintaining peace and restoring law and order, but for protecting an ailing head of state, Samuel Doe. At the time ECOMOG was created, its principal leaders (Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, Lansana Conte of Guinea, Dawda Jawara of The Gambia and Joseph Momoh of Sierra Leone) were all military men or civilian autocrats that, according to Max Sesay, were like an *"... unholy alliance of reactionary regimes in 19th century Europe"*, well-schooled in authoritarian tactics to maintain their respective regimes in power.<sup>7</sup> The same principle was applied in Sierra Leone, when Nigeria extended the ECOMOG operation to protect Momoh against attacks by the rebel force, RUF. Ironically, Momoh and Jawara were deposed in 1992 and 1994, respectively, while the political chaos resulting from the annulment of the June 1993 election in Nigeria precipitated Babangida's downfall. ECOWAS was sending out a message that challenged the assertion that ECOMOG could be a model for Africa. Rather than seek political solutions, a group of states deployed troops under the guise of regional peacekeeping to maintain the status quo by supporting a friend and ally that had a history of violent repression and human rights abuses against his population.

Nigeria's aggressive stance also led to political outbursts and disputes between member states of ECOWAS. In part, it engendered internal wrangling between Anglophone and Francophone countries. The two key Francophone states in the region, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, interpreted the ECOMOG intervention as an Anglophone exercise in regional domination, while Nigeria's forceful intervention was seen as the country's desire to flex its muscles further in the region.<sup>8</sup> The tension between Nigeria and its Francophone partners in ECOWAS led Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso to support Charles Taylor and the NPFL in their campaign to capture Liberia. Both countries were instrumental in supplying arms and training facilities to Charles Taylor and his rebel movement. The only Francophone state to have supported the Nigerian-led intervention in Liberia was Guinea, which had ceased to be part of *la francophonie* when the former president, Sekou Touré, refused to maintain links with its former colonial master in the 1960s.

Internal wrangling and divisions are not unique to ECOWAS. Tension between the US and its allies over the use of air-strikes rather than ground troops during the Kosovo crisis between March and June 1999, illustrates the problem of trying to achieve consensus among a number of states. Divisions among members of the UN Security Council over NATO's sidelining of the UN with regard to Kosovo, but more importantly, over how the operation was being conducted, led to angry exchanges between NATO powers in the Council (Britain, France and the US) and other permanent member states (China and Russia). Similarly, the various rifts and political entanglements between Nigeria and its allies during the Liberian crisis nearly led to the break up of ECOWAS. It was not until 1995 that ECOMOG changed its tactics against Charles Taylor. This was partly due to the change of administration in Nigeria, but also to low morale within the Nigerian army that was by now militarily exhausted. The financial strain of sustaining forces over a long period had taken its toll on Nigeria's population. In fact, by 1997, Nigeria had reportedly spent between US \$1 to \$2 billion on the Liberian war and contributed 70 per cent of the force capacity.

The change in tactics by ECOMOG was also due, in part, to the conciliatory leadership of Ghana's head of state, Jerry Rawlings. In fact, Rawlings not only brought Taylor and other warring factors to the negotiating table, but also managed to reconcile divisions between Nigeria and its Francophone detractors. The death of the Ivorian leader, Felix Houphouët-Boigny in 1995 also eased tensions between Nigeria and the Francophone states. Charles Taylor, however, was crucial to the events that took place from 1995. Having spent four years demanding the withdrawal of ECOMOG, in particular Nigeria, Taylor now adopted a friendlier stance. Nigeria was the only real challenge blocking Taylor's road to the presidential palace in Monrovia, and a conciliatory approach towards the government in Abuja, Taylor argued, would quicken his advance to the ultimate prize: political power. Nigeria began to mix diplomacy with force, when it turned its strategy to one of dialogue with Charles Taylor. From 1995, ECOMOG worked to achieve a peace agreement that would lead to an internationally supervised election on 19 July 1997 and the start of Liberia's transition from war to peace.

## ECOMOG in Sierra Leone: Enforcing peace with mercenaries

Clashes on the Sierra Leone-Liberia border and Charles Taylor's decision to exploit instability in Sierra Leone forced ECOMOG, in particular, Nigeria, to deploy troops on the border of both countries in 1991. By 1993, Nigeria's peacekeeping presence had extended into Sierra Leone. Since then, ECOMOG and Nigeria have been embroiled in the Sierra Leone civil war. The civil war began on 23 March 1991 when the main rebel group, RUF, with the assistance of some NPFL fighters and a small number of mercenaries and soldiers from Burkina Faso, invaded eastern Sierra Leone at Bomaru in the Kailahun district, and the Mano River bridge linking Liberia and Sierra Leone. The civil war was led by Alfred Foday Sankoh, a former corporal in the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) who was jailed for plotting to overthrow the regime of Dr Siaka Stevens in 1971. Despite elections in February 1996 and the signing of the Abidjan peace agreement in November of the same year, conflict intensified when dissident forces from the RSLMF formed themselves into the Armed Force Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and launched a *coup* against the government of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah on 25 May 1997. The RUF and AFRC joined forces and together conducted a brutal war against the civilian population of Sierra Leone before signing the Lomé peace agreement with the government in July 1999.

The intervention by ECOMOG was controversial from the outset. If the most significant aspect of the ECOMOG operation in Liberia was the division and near break-up of ECOWAS, then the introduction of the mercenary option in Sierra Leone was certainly the defining moment in West African attempts to manage conflict. In fact, Sierra Leone introduced the international community firmly into the world of the 'privatised peacekeeper' where mercenaries step in to keep or, as Sierra Leone demonstrated, to enforce the peace. The involvement of mercenaries, or private military companies, as they prefer to be called, is not a new phenomenon in Africa. Mercenaries have fought in African conflicts since the 1960s when the secessionist leader, Moïse Tshombé used white mercenary forces from South Africa and elsewhere in his 1964 war campaign in Congo-Kinshasa. Notorious mercenaries like Bob Dénard fought in various parts of Africa, mounting a *coup* in Benin in 1967 with only 60 paratroopers. 'Mad' Mike Hoare also gained a reputation for his mercenary activities in the Seychelles in 1977 and 1982. These figures were as seen as lawless and 'gung-ho', prepared to destabilise or fuel conflicts in already volatile regions.

In the post-Cold War era, mercenaries have acquired an executive or corporate identity. They package themselves neatly as defenders of legitimate regimes and claim to ensure peace and stability.<sup>9</sup> In post-Cold War Africa, former soldiers from South Africa's security forces claim that their operations in two of Africa's brutal conflicts, Angola and Sierra Leone, were aimed at restoring law and order. Under the name Executive Outcomes, South Africa's former servicemen who could not or did not want to find positions within the restructured and racially integrated post-apartheid South African National Defence Force (SANDF), became prominent in fighting against rebel movements like the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) between 1993-1995. Executive Outcomes extended its services to Sierra Leone at the request of Valentine Strasser, the leader of the National Provisional Ruling Council government after seizing power in a *coup* in 1992. Executive Outcomes withdrew its services in January 1997 as stipulated in the Abidjan peace agreement of November 1996.

However, it was reports linking the British Labour government to the involvement of the London-based Sandline International in Sierra Leone during 1997-1998 that sparked the controversy surrounding the use of private military companies in African conflicts.<sup>10</sup> The extent of their activities was exposed when President Kabbah and the Nigerian-led ECOMOG force, with the knowledge of the British High Commissioner of Sierra Leone, Peter Penfold, employed the services of Sandline International to prosecute the war against the AFRC and the RUF. The 'Sandline affair', as it was dubbed by the British press, led to the accusation that Britain was unprepared to mandate its troops to fight in African wars, but would privately sanction private military companies to participate in peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations. It also sent mixed messages about the future of major power military involvement in Africa: if countries like Nigeria were unable to maintain the peace, or if subregional organisations like ECOMOG needed extra manpower or resources, better to pay others to maintain the peace than place national armies at risk.

The use of private military companies is part of a growing trend in international peacekeeping where states, because of the cost and risk involved in sending national armies, turn to bodies that are able and willing to do battle in volatile regions of the world. The use of international peacekeepers is still apparent, but claims about the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of privatised soldiers have increased their involvement in managing several conflicts. Witness their use in the Balkans where prolonged warfare in the region has cost Western powers a considerable amount in humanitarian assistance. The US registered company, Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), has been heavily involved in the Balkans, most notably in Croatia in 1995. MPRI won a contract with the US State Department to help create and train a civilian controlled army in Croatia. Another US company, DynCorp was also asked by the US in 1998 to supply a contingent for the observer mission in Kosovo to observe the withdrawal of Serb forces.

Although the use of private military companies is not specific to Africa, their presence is more pronounced on the continent. Yet, while much of the debate, particularly in the UK, has focused on issues of legitimacy, ethics, regulation and the proper place of private military companies, a more serious question is whether this marks a significant trend in the management of peace and security in Africa. The involvement of private military companies constitutes a major development in post-Cold War Africa, more so if a subregional organisation like ECOMOG, as it did in Sierra Leone, appears to legitimise their role as peace enforcers. If ECOMOG is to be used as a model for other regions, the use of such actors remains an unanswered question in the debate on the nature of the security apparatus emerging on the continent. Let us leave aside, for a moment, the argument that the gradual retreat of Western powers has meant that private military companies are increasingly the only option available to African leaders in responding to conflicts and focus instead on what is taking place in African states.

Private military companies are not only in Africa because Western powers are unwilling to respond to or wary of African conflicts. A serious dimension that needs to be acknowledged is that private military companies are also on the continent because African leaders find them attractive as an extra security apparatus to protect them and their regimes. The conflict in Sierra Leone marked a dangerous phase in the future of security in the region, but also throughout the African continent. When the newly elected government of President Kabbah was deposed by dissident soldiers in May 1997, Sandline International formed part of the force, along with Nigeria and the *Kamajors*, an ethnically based civil defence force, that reinstalled Kabbah's government in March 1998. Here was an African leader, increasingly prepared to 'buy in' private military companies to secure peace, but more importantly, to exert control rather than seek political solutions to internal violence. Yet, while Sandline International

was partly instrumental in restoring Kabbah's leadership, it did not bring stability to Sierra Leone. Rather, Sandline terminated its contract in Sierra Leone while rebel forces rearmed, with reports suggesting military and financial assistance from Charles Taylor and the President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré.

From December 1998 until the signing of the Lomé peace agreement on 7 July 1999 in Togo, the RUF and the AFRC launched a devastating attack throughout Sierra Leone. Kabbah and ECOMOG were not alone in relying on mercenaries. Charles Taylor's network of mercenaries, mainly from the Ukraine, was effective in supporting the RUF/ACRF military campaign. The ECOMOG contingent of 15 000 was unable to respond to the jungle warfare tactics of the RUF and the AFRC. Instead, the *Kamajors* and other civil defence forces orchestrated much of the fighting that took place between January and June 1999.<sup>11</sup> The ECOMOG peacekeeping-cum-peace enforcement operation in Sierra Leone was dealt a damaging blow and once again raised questions about how much of the ECOMOG style should be replicated in other parts of Africa.

The use of private military companies did not disguise the fact that, while some troop-contributing countries did have experience in numerous UN-led peacekeeping operations, they nonetheless "... *lacked the necessary ingredients for responding to those conflicts that require peace enforcement strategies.*"<sup>12</sup> Only NATO or a US-led coalition has the capacity to pursue peace enforcement, and even its operational experience in the Balkans has exposed its weakness in interoperability, intelligence-sharing, distant deployment and the sustainment of troops on the ground. Alongside NATO states that are still building structures to enhance their operational capabilities, West African states have a long way to go in creating the "... *necessary physical and political infrastructures or financial capacity*" to operate successfully in their volatile region.<sup>13</sup>

A significant aspect of the Sierra Leone conflict was that member states of ECOWAS did not openly attack the use of Executive Outcomes or Sandline International throughout the country's eight-year civil war. Yet, how could they, when the stated purpose of their involvement was to protect the government of Sierra Leone? It would seem from the statements supporting ECOMOG interventions, that member states were giving tacit approval for the use of private military companies. The lack of success of Executive Outcomes, not only in Sierra Leone, but also in Angola, and of Sandline International in Sierra Leone, undermines the assumption that such actors can provide stability. Sandline International failed to defeat the rebel forces in Sierra Leone. Surely, this is one aspect of ECOMOG that cannot be replicated or used as a model in other parts of the continent? Yet, while some analysts condemn private military companies, a harsh reality is that they may become an alternative security apparatus in weak, fragile or collapsed states like Sierra Leone where state institutions, plus the infrastructures (i.e. technical and central ethos) that support them, have broken down or have suffered years of decay.<sup>14</sup>

While the debate over the use of private military companies in Sierra Leone raged on, another ECOMOG operation took place further along the West African coastline in Guinea-Bissau. This time, neither private military companies nor Nigeria's aggressive military tactics were features of the operation. Rather, the use of West African troops trained under American and French peacekeeping exercises introduced another dimension to ECOMOG operations and raises further questions about its usefulness as a model for Africa.

## ECOMOG and Guinea-Bissau: An attempt to correct past mistakes

As battle-hardened ECOMOG forces contemplated their ability to stamp out the spiral of violence, Guinea-Bissau was supposed to be an opportunity to prove that it was an able and responsible force in the region. Conflict in Guinea-Bissau broke out on 6 June 1998 between the army and the government after President João Bernardo 'Nino' Viera sacked his army chief, Brigadier Ansumane Mané. President Viera had accused Mané of trafficking in arms with the rebel secessionist force, the *Forces démocratiques de Casamance* (MFDC) in the Casamance region of neighbouring Senegal. Mané, however, also accused President Viera of trafficking in arms with the MFDC.

What triggered the eventual conflict was Viera's appointment of a new army chief, but also his decision to send a contingent to arrest Brigadier Mané at his home. Mané's home was surrounded with heavily armed troops loyal to him and in mutiny against the national army. The army mutineers immediately formed themselves into the *Junta Militar* in protest against the failure of President Viera to institute democratic governance in Guinea-Bissau. As fighting continued between supporters of Mané and the army, Senegal and Guinea sent forces to support President Viera. Senegal's decision to send as many as 3 000 troops was partly to counter the support that the MFDC were reportedly receiving from Mané. As heavy artillery rained down on Bissau — a small and crowded capital — hundreds of citizens were killed and many fled to the outskirts of the city.

The initial mediation to stop the fighting was mainly led by Portugal and foreign ministers from the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP): Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe. However, it was Nigerian officials who brokered a breakthrough in the conflict on the sidelines of the ECOWAS meeting held between 1-2 November 1998 in Abuja, Nigeria. A peace agreement was signed between President Viera and Brigadier Mané on 2 November under the auspices of ECOWAS. The peace agreement called for a weapons amnesty for both sides; the immediate formation of a unified government; elections set for no later than March 1999; the withdrawal of foreign troops (that is, Senegalese and Guinean troops) from Guinea-Bissau; and the introduction of a buffer force of ECOMOG peacekeepers.<sup>15</sup> ECOWAS trumpeted the peace agreement as a sign that the troubled West African region was on the way to stability after years of endless conflict. ECOWAS had negotiated the accord, worked hard to win support for the peace process, and agreed that ECOMOG send an interposition force to monitor the peace agreement.

The ECOMOG operation was largely led by Francophone countries in the region (Benin, Niger, Mali and Togo) and one Anglophone country, The Gambia. In addition, the operation was supported logistically and financially under the French peacekeeping training initiative for African countries, *Renforcement des capacités africaines maintien de la paix* (Reinforcement of African peacekeeping capacity — RECAMP). However, the forces involved were drawn from small countries with inexperienced soldiers. Benin provided an estimate of 150 troops that had been trained under the US peacekeeping training programme, African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), the first time troops trained under this initiative had been used in a peacekeeping operation. Finally, Togo gave 150 troops, while Mali gave 120. Yet, these troops were expected to provide a strong buffer to block rebel activities within the country and on the borders of Senegal. ECOMOG, however, found it difficult to deploy the proposed force of 1 500 men.

However, the assistance provided through RECAMP and ACRI still exposed the fact that, beyond Nigeria, many West African states were militarily weak and consequently unable to launch the force necessary to quell the tide of conflicts like that taking place in Guinea-Bissau. The extent of the weakness facing the troop-contributing countries could be seen in the letter written by the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Lansana Kouyate, and later addressed to the UN Security Council by the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. In it, Kouyate stated:

*"It would be particularly useful to acquire for ECOMOG appropriate logistics for the deployment of a naval unit, made necessary by Guinea-Bissau's geographical make-up. The acquisition of an aeroplane or a helicopter is also essential to enable ECOMOG to make important, urgent trips between Bissau and points outside the country."*<sup>16</sup>

Essentially, what Guinea-Bissau required was a combat-style operation, but the states involved could only supply "sub-unit sized contributions."<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, ECOMOG lacked adequate radio communications equipment not only to contact troops dispersed throughout Guinea-Bissau, but also the ECOMOG headquarters. The outbreak of renewed violence in May 1999 not only served to demonstrate that ECOMOG could not prevent conflicts when warring factions prefer war to peace, but also undermined the credibility of ECOWAS claims that ECOMOG could provide security in the region. Although the interim president, Malam Bacai Sanha, the prime minister, Francisco Fadul and General Mané asked ECOMOG to remain until the elections scheduled for 28 November 1999, ECOMOG troops withdrew from Guinea-Bissau.

## SUBREGIONAL INTERVENTION BEYOND WEST AFRICA: CAN ECOMOG BE REPLICATED?<sup>18</sup>

After nine years of active peacekeeping-cum-peace enforcement operations, ECOMOG has become an important factor in managing violence and disorder in West Africa, but not without the forceful and aggressive tactics of the regional hegemon, Nigeria. It is primarily because of Nigeria's role that all within the region do not favour ECOMOG as a model for regional security. In its nine years of operations, Charles Taylor, for example, has challenged the role of ECOMOG and Nigeria.

Since the ECOWAS decision to intervene in the Liberian civil war, Taylor has held ECOMOG, in particular, Nigeria with contempt, seeing it as an obstacle against his struggle for power in Liberia. Taylor blamed ECOMOG for the duration of the seven-year war in Liberia. Although Nigeria was quick to establish close relations in Liberia following Taylor's inauguration on 2 August 1997, Taylor made it clear that he rejects the participation of ECOMOG, in particular, that of Nigeria in the rebuilding of Liberia's armed forces. Nigeria is also unsure of Taylor's role or reliability to maintain stability in Liberia or in the region, particularly in terms of the future of Sierra Leone.

Taylor is held responsible for atrocities committed by the RUF and later the AFRC in Sierra Leone. When renewed fighting broke out towards the end of 1998 in Sierra Leone, he was accused of providing a network of mercenaries, as well as weapons and money to the RUF. Taylor consistently denied the existence of five RUF training camps in Liberia. However, the links between Taylor's forces and the RUF are strong and bound by long-lasting personal ties and business interests that extend back to the start of the Sierra Leone civil war in 1991. More importantly, Taylor successfully exploited links with the RUF when he developed a clandestine regional trading network based on the capture of diamond-rich regions by the RUF. In a study of the Liberian and Sierra Leone civil war, William Reno provides an illuminating insight into Taylor's commercial activity. Using interviews with NPFL soldiers, Reno draws attention to Taylor's use of dissident Sierra Leoneans and NPFL fighters "... to grab Sierra Leone's diamond mining fields" in an effort to add to his mini-empire of rubber and timber plantations captured during the seven-year civil war in Liberia.<sup>19</sup> More importantly, Taylor's mini-empire is also based on diamonds smuggled from Sierra Leone, an indication of the extent of Taylor's business networks in the region.

Charles Taylor is a destabilising force in the region, capable of surrounding himself with numerous dissident groups who see him as an icon for rebel movements seeking to overthrow their leaders in the region. In fact, Taylor's initial recruitment in the NPFL during the Liberian civil war included young left-wing radical intellectuals, university graduates, army deserters, dissenters and *coup* plotters from Guinea-Bissau, Niger, The Gambia and Sierra Leone, and Burkinabe soldiers seconded by President Campaoré. Taylor's key ally in the region is President Campaoré and together they are reported to be building a network of "... informal (often criminal) business operations" from Monrovia (Liberia) to Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), via Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Niger and The Gambia. Given Taylor's ruthlessness and claims that he wants to destabilise the region for the purpose of setting up an association of rogue regimes that will provide refuge for international criminal gangs and diamond smugglers, ECOMOG may find it difficult to exist as a force aimed at creating regional stability.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, despite difficulties with Charles Taylor, ECOMOG has raised the expectations of the international community and the OAU that it can be a model for conflict management in Africa. Crucially, ECOMOG has managed to overcome the perception that it is essentially an Anglophone enterprise. A plan is under way to harmonise matters of regional security between ECOWAS and the West African Francophone defence body, *L'accord de non-aggression et d'assistance en matière de défense* (L'ANAD).<sup>21</sup> Nothing concrete has been established, but there are suggestions that L'ANAD could become the security wing of ECOWAS. The prospect of collaboration between these bodies would signal a positive development in West Africa's attempt to build a security apparatus.

However, based on evidence of events taking place in other regions of Africa at the end of the 1990s, it might be difficult to see the ECOMOG model being replicated throughout the continent. The advent of subregional conflict management seems limited (and even this is not certain) to the West African region. Subregional conflict management is largely a West African phenomenon that is determined by how Nigeria balances its use of aggressive force with that of building a more institutional approach to the management of conflicts with its regional partners that are largely sceptical of Nigeria's force capacity and power projection in the region. The other regions of Africa — the Horn of Africa, Central and Southern Africa — have not displayed a similar zeal in steering their subregional bodies to manage violence and disorder like ECOMOG. In fact, a notable feature of inter-African affairs in these regions is that no subregional hegemon or institution seems able to mediate conflicts.

In the Horn of Africa, an unremitting overlap of conflicts, civil wars, proxy wars and, in 1998, interstate war, undermined IGAD.<sup>22</sup> IGAD was initially established in 1986 under its previous name, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD), to respond to drought and famine in the Horn of Africa. It was renamed IGAD in 1996 with a mandate to mediate conflicts, in particular, the Sudanese civil war. The Horn of Africa, comprising Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan (and peripheral states, Kenya and Uganda) has never been renowned for its political, economic or social stability. Yet, the early 1990s appeared to presage a new era where, despite the disintegration of Somalia and the continuing conflict in Sudan, the region was attempting to resolve its difficulties through IGAD.

After fourteen years of rule under Mengistu Haile Mariam, Ethiopia had thrown off the shackles of authoritarianism and repression and Eritrea emerged as a new independent nation after thirty years of conflict. Uganda was labelled a regional power due to the energy and vibrancy of President Yoweri Museveni. Along with Museveni, Zenawi Meles, prime minister of Ethiopia, and Issayas Afewerki, president of Eritrea, were seen as new leaders who characterised the African Renaissance. All three emerged from complex civil wars and war-ravaged societies. Their agenda was the consolidation of national unity and reconstruction. At a regional level, these leaders emphasised the need to build political co-operation, but more importantly, to initiate economic recovery through the revitalisation of bodies like the EAC and IGAD in the hope of improving Africa's economic development.

However, IGAD has struggled to present itself as a credible organisation capable of resolving regional problems, primarily because its main leaders were embroiled in many of the conflicts occurring in the region. Rather than mediate conflicts in the region, member states of IGAD continually exacerbate conflicts by supplying weapons and ammunition, or by allowing rebels to use their territories as launchpads for insurgencies. In a policy of retaliation and counterretaliation, the governments of Sudan and Uganda continually engage in destabilising proxy wars on their borders by backing rebels opposed to their governments. For example, Museveni continually aligned his forces with the Sudanese People's Liberation Army in south Sudan. In return, the Islamic regime of Omar al-Bashir in Khartoum, Sudan, sent arms to rebel opponents of Museveni — the Lord's Resistance Army and the Allied Democratic Force in the northern and western parts of Uganda. Thus, regional meddling — a growing feature of inter-African affairs with various states pursuing hegemonic aspirations by challenging regional stability — has challenged the possibility of regional co-operation in security matters. The likelihood of implementing an ECOMOG model in this part of Africa seems bleak. More worrying for the future of regional security, however, was the outbreak of interstate war between two of Africa's principal states in the Horn of Africa, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

However, it is in Central and Southern Africa — where a wave of seemingly endless conflicts converged in the DRC — that subregional conflict management has been severely undermined, and some might argue, has failed. The conflict in the DRC from July 1998 was partly the outcome of internal conflicts in Burundi and Rwanda in the mid-1990s. Both conflicts exposed the regional implications of deadly civil wars. The devastating effects of genocide are still being felt in the Great Lakes region, and in Central and Southern Africa, in particular, in the DRC, a member state of SADC.<sup>23</sup> Kabila sought the assistance of SADC members, and Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe intervened under the SADC defence agreements stipulating support for a member state facing aggression. Other members, in particular South Africa, preferred diplomatic negotiations to the use of force.

The creation of SADC in 1992 was a reflection of new co-operation among Southern African states as the structures of the apartheid system in South Africa were gradually dismantled. Since its creation, SADC has been trying to get agreement on developing into a multinational instrument for conflict prevention and resolution in Southern Africa. However, the conflict in the DRC exposed differences in approach among SADC member states. The lack of consensus made it difficult to formulate a document that discusses subregional involvement in security co-ordination, conflict mediation, and general military co-operation. This has meant that SADC leaders have resorted to unilateral decision-making in resolving conflicts in the region. The main problem for SADC, and consequently for South Africa, is that there are no like-minded allies in the region.

The failure of neighbouring countries to work through bodies like SADC to resolve the conflict in the DRC demonstrates the difficulties of self-policing among African states. The conflict in the DRC certainly compromised the position of SADC and, far from fulfilling its aim to become a credible regional security organisation, SADC became a source of tension between the major powers in the region. Ironically, SADC invited the DRC to be a member state in the hope that this would stabilise the country, but the exact opposite has happened and the unity of SADC has been severely compromised. The decision to bring the DRC into SADC was a rational one, for it meant that the region could control President Laurent Désiré Kabila, an incompetent leader, but the policy has not only boomeranged,<sup>24</sup> it has also raised doubts about SADC's ability to manage regional conflicts.

The prominent role taken by the South African president, Thabo Mbeki since winning the elections in June 1999, raised hope that this major power could build regional consensus. Along with regional heads of states from Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia, states intervening in the DRC signed the Lusaka peace agreement in July and were later joined by rebel groups in August 1999. Yet, the peace agreement has not lessened tensions between the countries surrounding the DRC. What the DRC exposed, was the interplay of internal and interstate disputes. In fact, the two close allies in the DRC conflict, Rwanda and Uganda clashed on several occasions during 1999. Both appeared to have diverging strategic and diplomatic interests on the prosecution of the war. The divisions also show how fragile the possibilities are of devising regionally based security apparatuses to deal with conflicts in this region of Africa.

## CONCLUSION

The establishment of a peacekeeping-cum-peace enforcement capacity within ECOWAS gives practical expression to the co-operation envisaged by the UN. The ECOMOG interventions were fully endorsed, not just by an international community that could no longer find solutions to African conflicts, but by Africans who wanted to break the dependence on outside military assistance in responding to African conflicts. In the aftermath of Cold War interference by the major Western powers in Africa, the desire of Africans not only to keep their own peace, but to define their security apparatus is welcomed.

This article has presented an appraisal of ECOMOG, challenging assertions that it could be a model for Africa. It might be necessary to conclude on a more optimistic note, pointing to the positive aspects of ECOMOG. Leaving aside questions about the quality of the intervention and the peace and stability ECOMOG tried to achieve, ECOMOG did shed light on the potential for African regions to develop mechanisms for managing conflicts. As security in the 21st century will largely be an African responsibility, the advent of subregional conflict management in various parts of Africa should not be overlooked. More importantly, with the minimal involvement or participation from the international community in resolving Africa's numerous wars, Africans need to build various regional capacities to manage conflicts. There is no alternative to ECOMOG, IGAD, SADC or the EAC. However, the challenge for Africans is to work closely in devising institutional approaches and rules on managing conflicts. ECOMOG has opened the door for Africans to determine the future of security; the task is for the rest of Africa to build upon its various trials and tribulations.

However, it cannot be overstated that a degree of caution is needed by all who wish to promote ECOMOG as a model for Africa. Throughout its nine years of operating in difficult circumstances, the simple fact cannot be overlooked that ECOMOG fell victim to the geopolitical machinations of Nigeria, a powerful regional hegemon. Now that this hegemon has embarked on the road to democratisation, seasoned observers of ECOMOG can only hope that it uses ECOMOG as a 'force for good', not only

in managing West African security dilemmas, but in informing other subregional organisations as they attempt to respond to conflicts.

## Endnotes

I would like to thank 'Fumni Olonisakin for her comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

1. C Ero, 'The evolution of norms in international relations: Intervention and the principle of non-intervention in intra-African affairs', unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 1999a, p 218.
2. A England, 'Uganda predicts ECOMOG-style local units in 3yrs', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 5 May 1999, p 20.
3. 'Highlights of treaty', *West Africa*, 19-25 July 1993, p 1248.
4. C Ero, 'The future of ECOMOG in West Africa', in J Cilliers & G Mills (eds), [\*From peacekeeping to complex emergencies: Peace support missions in Africa\*](#), South African Institute for International Affairs and Institute for Security Studies, Johannesburg/Pretoria, 1999b, p 60.
5. The other warring factions were the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) which broke away from Charles Taylor and was being led by 'Prince' Yormie Johnson; the National Patriotic Front of Liberia — Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC), another breakaway faction led by Tom Woewiyu and Sam Dokie, murdered by Charles Taylor's security guards in November 1997; the Lofa Defence Force (LDF) led by Francis Massaquoi; Alhaji Kromah's Mandingo-based United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO-K), a Krahn-based ULIMO splinter group led by Roosevelt Johnson (ULIMO-J) and another Krahn-based group, the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) led by George Boley.
6. *Decision A/Dec. 1/8/90 on the ceasefire and establishment of an ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group for Liberia*, Economic Community of West African States First Session of the Community Standing Mediation Committee, Banjul, The Gambia, 6-7 August 1990, Article 2(2), p 3.
7. M Sesay, 'Collective security or collective disaster? Regional peacekeeping in West Africa', *Security Dialogue*, 26(2), 1995, pp. 212-213.
8. The degree of disunity between Nigeria and the two main Francophone countries did not stem from the Liberian civil war, but is tied up in the complex historical relations between these states in the region. Relations between Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire have tended to be fraught with tensions, especially when the latter called for the recognition of Biafra during the Nigerian civil war in 1967. Attempts were made to facilitate co-operation through the creation of ECOWAS in 1975, but relations have remained strained.
9. For example, see the statement by Sandline International in which the company claims to "improve the state of security, stability and general conditions in client countries", <[www.sandline.com/site/index.html](http://www.sandline.com/site/index.html)>. See also C Coker, 'Outsourcing war', paper presented at the *Non-State Actors Conference*, London School of Economics, 27-28 September 1999. For a general analysis of the trend towards mercenaries in Africa, see J Cilliers & R Cornwell, 'Mercenaries and the privatisation of security in Africa', [\*African Security Review\*, 8\(2\)](#), 1999; and A Musah & J Fayemi (eds), *Mercenaries: An African security dilemma*, Pluto Press, London, 2000.
10. For an analysis of mercenary activity in Sierra Leone, see D Francis, 'Mercenary intervention in Sierra Leone: Providing national security or international exploitation', *Third World Quarterly*, 20(2), 1999; F Olonisakin, Mercenaries fill the vacuum, *The World Today*, June 1998; and D Shearer, *Private armies and military intervention*, Adelphi Paper, 316, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.

11. The *Kamajors* were essentially a local defence force fighting to defend their communities in the absence of help from an incompetent and corrupt state army. In a sense, their response was 'a plague on both these houses' — to the RUF for its brutality and to the RSLMF for failing to protect the population. However, the *Kamajors* also inflicted widespread atrocities and summary executions against those suspected of supporting the RUF/AFRC. See *The impasse in Sierra Leone — Centre for Democracy and Development briefing paper on current developments in Sierra Leone and prospects for conflict management*, Centre for Democracy and Development, London, January 1999.
12. Ero, op cit, 1999b, p 65.
13. Ibid, p 65.
14. C Ero, *Restructuring the security sector: Lessons and challenges for Sierra Leone*, Working Paper, Conflict, Security & Development Group, Centre for Defence Studies, forthcoming, 2000.
15. A Clewlow, 'Peace pact may mark end to Guinea-Bissau crisis', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 11 November 1998, p 22.
16. *Report on the situation in Guinea-Bissau prepared by the ECOWAS Executive Secretary*, UN Security Council, Doc S/1999/432, 16 April 1999.
17. Ero, op cit, 1999b, p 69.
18. This section and the parts that follow are taken from research conducted while at the International Institute for Strategic Studies and form part of ongoing research at the Institute.
19. W Reno, *Warlord politics and African states*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder and London, 1998, p 98.
20. 'West Africa according to Mr. Taylor', *Africa Confidential*, 40(2), 22 January 1999, p. 2; Ero, op cit, 1999b, p 66.
21. L' ANAD was established in 1977 under a defence pact between France and Francophone states in the West Africa region to respond to matters of defence and security.
22. The member states of IGAD are Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.
23. SADC was established in 1992 to replace the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). Its members include Angola, Botswana, the DRC, Lesotho, Namibia, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
24. Discussions with Chris Landsberg, Deputy Director, Centre for Policy Studies, South Africa, 24 March 1999.

# Defining Warlords

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*John Mackinlay, Centre for Defence Studies, London*

## INTRODUCTION

Warlordism is an ugly, pejorative expression, evoking brutality, racketeering and the suffering of civil communities. In this article, the term 'warlord' refers to the leader of an armed band, possibly numbering up to several thousand fighters, who can hold territory locally and, at the same time, act financially and politically in the international system without interference from the state in which he is based.<sup>1</sup> In crisis zones around the world, where civil war and humanitarian disasters accompany the struggles of societies in transition, the warlord is the key actor. He confronts national governments, plunders their resources, moves and exterminates unco-operative populations, interdicts international relief and development, and derails peace processes. With only a few exceptions, the modern warlord lives successfully beyond the reach and jurisdiction of civil society. His ability to seek refuge in the crisis zone and the lack of international commitment to take effective action together ensure his survival.

Although the warlord is a principal factor in today's war zones, international military forces, humanitarian relief and development agencies and international civil administration units involved in stabilisation and restoration spend little effort in defining and isolating this shadowy figure who will, in some form, be certain to impact negatively on their agenda. There is certainly a flourishing genre of writing under the banner of the 'economy of civil war' which explains many aspects of the warlord's economic survival and his exploitation of the resources of a failing state, and is an important step towards understanding the warlord syndrome. However, warlordism implies a diversity of activities and cultural structures, and a definitive picture must also involve other actors, including anthropologists and military experts in addition to the humanitarians who are at the epicentre of the 'economy of civil war' approach. This article sets out to show the warlord in more general terms, suggesting that warlordism is derived from a culture that predates its manifestations in the 20th century, explaining his predatory status in the conflict zone, his military capabilities and the sociology of his personal controlling devices. It is suggested that, besides spending more effort on defining warlords, the international community should take a more targeted and determined approach towards dealing with them.

## WARLORDS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Before the tribes of Europe achieved statehood, they were subdivided among local rulers or barons and their tenants. A baron was more than a landlord. He might pay homage to a king, but on his own territory he was autonomous, collecting revenues, raising armies and enforcing his version of the law. In return for paying taxes, his tenants and kinsmen expected his protection while they remained within his territory. The itinerant chieftains whose clans lived in poorer areas as herdsmen were less able to enjoy the settled lifestyle of a cultivator. They extorted money from traders whose caravans passed below their fortified keeps in the mountain passes. The relationship between the baron, with his rich agricultural territory, and the clan chieftain, with his herds on the mountain pass, was that their autonomy and power to act freely in their own territory rested on their ability to protect it by force of arms. Despite their abuse of power and, at times, unattractive behaviour, local rulers also performed important social functions, supporting religion and culture, and encouraging some aspects of a

primitive form of civil society. The warlord, in contrast, was a negative phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> Although his power rested on the possession of military forces, like the baron and the chieftain, the warlord occupied territory in a strictly predatory manner and his social activities seldom enriched the lives of the civilian families in his grasp. Warlordism involved the use of military force in a narrower, more selfish way than that of the baron or the chieftain. It implied protectionism, racketeering and the interception of revenues, without any mitigating cultural or religious commitments, and was not a concept that became intellectually developed in our culture.

John Keegan's analysis of the Mongols, Huns and Buminid Turks sets them apart from the agricultural European races as the 'horse peoples', a nomadic culture that lived by war alone. Their failure to survive as a society was linked to their inability to translate conquest into permanent power. Their presence was "... *extractive not stabilising, designed to support the nomad way of life, not to change it.*"<sup>3</sup> The horse people of Genghis Khan were ultimately defeated. Very little of their culture and lifestyle survived in civil society today. Their pursuit of warfare as a way of life also fell beyond the comprehension of Clausewitzian writers and communicators whose only concept of violence was as an instrument of policy. In this manner, warlordism and the nomad raiders arouse similarly negative responses, existing at the dark edges of history, mercifully failing to make much cultural impact on social development, but also failing to attract intellectual attention or any exploratory effort to understand them as a phenomenon. Even if barons and chieftains were warlords in a sense, it was not in this role that they survive in the fabric of people's lives today and it is possible to speculate that the longstanding dissonance between warlordism and civil society is such that it is almost impossible for the one to deal intuitively with the other.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHINESE WARLORDS

Warlordism became more relevant after the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911 when China was devastated by a series of civil wars between competing provincial rulers. The term achieved a sensational connotation when foreign correspondents used it to describe the violent and rapine behaviour of the provincial rulers. The warlord period in China from 1911 until the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese war in 1937 was a time of chaos and rapid change. According to Diana Lary, the violence was pervasive, soldiers fought each other constantly in an average of eight full-scale wars a year, in addition to the innumerable small-scale clashes. In 1923, there were sixteen separate campaigns.<sup>4</sup> To a society, which had followed the Confucian ethic of brush over sword for centuries, the rude invasion of rampaging militarism was a calamity. The Chinese upper classes were paying the full price of their failure to acknowledge the importance of military power. For centuries, they had disdained the attributes of the warrior and all that went with it, including physical entertainments, prize-fighting and team sports. The military were not only despised by the Chinese élite, but also by society at large.<sup>5</sup>

By the time China's effete society woke up to the realities of military power, it was too late and the conditions which were to encourage the rise of the local warlords already prevailed. During the declining Qing dynasty in the mid-19th century, there had been a devolution of power to provincial level. According to Franz Michael, China's 20th century warlords began life as provincial military commanders. The weakness of the Qing rulers and their reluctance to concentrate military power in a central command structure encouraged fragmentation. They believed that a dispersal of interests would protect them from the possibility of a widespread military uprising. However, as the provincial force commanders' power increased, they expected a greater freedom to administer their own territory and began to organise their own revenues. While the reach of the Qing court diminished, provincial commanders grew more assertive. When the dynasty finally collapsed in 1911, the autonomous military commanders were already poised to fill the political vacuum that had enlarged in the final years of the dynasty. An environment which encouraged warlordism had begun to emerge in the preceding thirty years of gradual collapse as the state-wide military structure devolved to a more personalised regional system.<sup>6</sup> There were also qualitative differences in the military forces that developed during this period. Some provincial armies, such as Yunnan, were organised on the lines of modern military formations based on the prevailing European doctrines, whereas many of the provincial forces were individually organised around the personality of the new local commander.

The violent struggle which followed, is well-documented by both Chinese biographers of the warlords and foreign analysts.<sup>7</sup> The characteristics of the violence and the behaviour of the armed bands are relevant to our understanding of modern civil conflict. Despite the longstanding contempt of the literati and upper classes for the military profession, Chinese society became pervasively militarised at a surprising speed. In the chaotic circumstances of the civil wars, volunteering for the military offered a chance for the down-trodden peasant to escape from the drudgery of rural serfdom. For them the military offered the possibility of wealth and unaccustomed power. Belonging to a military band and possessing a gun appealed to a barely suppressed instinct that was older and possibly stronger than the effete cultures of the outgoing regime. In many cases, it was enough to carry a weapon, there was no need for ammunition or a proficiency in its use, the breech loading rifle itself was the symbol of new power. Armed in this manner, a force in occupation could requisition buildings, seize war materials, conscript labour and levy taxes. At a much lower level, beyond the restrictions of army discipline, small groups of soldiers could use the threat of their weapons to loot personal property, to rape, to steal harvests and commit casual acts of terrible violence without fear of reprisal. In this way, the warlords destroyed much of China's social and cultural heritage. The marauding bands which detached themselves from warlord armies were "*... more dangerous as groups than as individuals, because the group gave its members the courage to behave badly. The real horror was the unpredictability.*"<sup>8</sup>

On the whole, Chinese analysts rationalised the brutality of the warring militias by explaining that the men involved were from the lowest order of society, poor blank creatures, so stupid that they lacked any sense of self-preservation, who were simply acting in accordance with the expectations of society. Lary shows that some Guomintang leaders, however, took the more sophisticated view that the raw material of the militia was not cruel and violent by nature.<sup>9</sup> They had been brutalised by the army where they were routinely beaten, abused and physically endangered by careless leadership. This constant assault by their immediate superiors removed their normal sensitivities and reasoning faculties. Lary's conclusions about this newly emerging, fragile military regime have much relevance to the power structures of the modern warlord. She observed with some accuracy how a personalised gang culture replaced, or emerged in place of the formal military command structure, and how this acted as a spur and a licence to the gratuitous violence of the subgroups within the faction.

*"The Chinese military world of the warlord was too new and too fragmented to have established formal standards of behaviour. Soldiers learned how to behave in an ad hoc fashion. They became predatory towards the civilian world, not as a matter of policy, but in imitation of the way their commanders treated them ..."*<sup>10</sup>

An unrelated but important issue to emerge from the later period of the Chinese civil wars was the fundamental distinction between the *modus operandi* of the warlord and the insurgent. Mao's approach to this same chaotic period reveals a military force with radically different objectives and survival ethics. The Chinese warlord, on the one hand, had established himself from the power base of a former provincial leader and, thus endowed, could afford to take a rapine attitude towards the local population in the short term. In stark contrast, Mao's forces, if they were to survive tactical defeat, had to *rely* on widespread popular support. Mao had to woo his constituency, they must want to feed him, to hide him and to act as his eyes and ears. The population were unlikely to do this if his soldiers acted violently towards them. Mao's army was therefore sternly disciplined in its relationship to the local population. As a result, in contrast to the warlord, Red Army fighters were welcomed because they were regarded as part of the local constituency. It is also interesting that, unlike his Mandarin masters, Mao also had no illusions about the importance of military power. In particular, during his later efforts to stabilise China, he entertained no soft options for a negotiated settlement. The party, he insisted, must possess the gun, "*... war can only be abolished through war, in order to get rid of the gun we must first grasp it in our hand.*"<sup>11</sup>

The Chinese experience of warlords is important and provides a reliable perspective. The obvious lessons are perhaps now less interesting. The conditions which encouraged the growing power and opportunities for the warlord (the weakening state, for example) are widely understood and have been

exhaustively analysed.<sup>12</sup> It is Lary's minutiae on the sociology of the warlord gang and the dislocation of its individual members which may need to be rediscovered and hopefully progressed into a new chapter of understanding. Lary seemed to be on the threshold of explaining some of the behavioural logic of the faction fighters, collectively and individually. Her version of the abandoned military code of conduct and the adoption of *ad hoc* rules, based on personal controlling devices of a much more primitive kind, seem to explain some of the cruelty and passion of the Chinese civil wars and today's modern violence. The violence and destruction of the Chinese experience reinforce the pejorative sense of the earlier definition of warlords, it distinguishes the warlord as a negative phenomenon, a scourge on the population that seemed to offer no mitigating benefits.

## A NEW STRATEGIC ERA

The Chinese warlord phenomenon was a response to a pattern of decline within the state. The warlords were reactive, they did not try to seize power from the hands of a thriving government as an insurgent might and, with few exceptions, they acted only when the state had become terminally weak. If the determining factor of their existence was the environment, why should the warlords of the 1990s resemble the early Chinese version? Are there not likely to be important differences dictated by the circumstances of Qing dynasty China that were far removed from the 1990s world? In her effort to define the new strategic era, Mary Kaldor compares the 'new wars' of this decade to the 'old wars' of the Clausewitzian paradigm.<sup>13</sup> 'Old wars' were conducted between states. In her model, the state was strong, it had achieved a monopoly of violence within its territory, it had eliminated private wars, private armies and civilian militias. There was a separation between war and peace, military and civil, public and private. The armies were professionally officered and raised under the provisions of the state. The armed soldier was distinguished from the civilian by his uniform. There were rules for combat which governed the relationship of the officer to the soldier, the treatment of wounded, the custody of prisoners and the protection of non-combatants. Violence was impersonal, the soldier pressing the trigger did not recognise his target as an individual. After the passion of physical contact in battle was over, there was seldom an overriding desire to continue in a cycle of revenge killing. The conflict was contained in time and space.

However, the 'new wars' of this decade are an antithesis in every respect. The state has become terminally weakened, its monopoly of violence has disintegrated, state power has declined, its reach has shrunk back to the enclaves around the capital. The professional armies have broken apart and are replaced by private security forces, civilian militias and bandit gangs that recruit child soldiers. The rules and distinctions have disappeared. The vast majority of the casualties are civilians. The armed man no longer wears a uniform, there are no frontlines, no separations between civil and military, state and private, and war and peace. To some extent, the civil wars in China reflected these conditions. Many of the characteristics of 'new wars' flowed from the weakness of the state and, in the case of China, the failing Qing dynasty had also collapsed with plenty of evidence of the same pervasive violence that overwhelmed the separations of war from peace and civil from military. The difference between the 1911 warlord and the 1990 warlord was dictated by the environment beyond the local conflict zone, it was the difference between the 1911 world and the 1990 world.

For the commander of a warring band who had to move and operate freely beyond the reach of the government of the host state in which he was based, the most significant change was that the world had become increasingly harnessed to the purposes of organised society. It was impossible for the new warlord to be in isolation, there was no longer a space or a wilderness which could also be a refuge. In a physical sense, there were fewer wild and unreachable areas within a state and, in an intangible sense, there was less cultural space, less separation between states. Another dimension of global compression in the last thirty years has been the intensive developments in electronics, transport technology and the use of space. There are more than 200 communications satellites in the sky today.<sup>14</sup> The warlord in the war zone in Zaïre is only a telephone call away from the broker on Wall Street. The voters in Islington can see what is happening in the streets of Pristina on a daily basis. A surge of communications of every kind seemed to be dragging individuality away from the state, away from the distinct communities and ethnic groups towards a global culture, at its worst an American culture, personified by the Marlboro cowboy in his blue jeans. Some saw particularism and identity politics as a local reaction to these stresses.<sup>15</sup> The physical nature of the land and the dynamics of urban development were also changing. In the conflict areas of sub-Saharan Africa, there has been a general migration of the displaced population towards the township areas.<sup>16</sup> Densely populated cities

expanded to become conurbations which continued to grow, crossing borders and spanning waterways as they have in the Niger delta, in the Hong Kong-Shenzen-Canton economic zones and in the convergence of European populations in urban areas from Southampton to Essen.

During the 1970s, many newly emerged nations fell into debt. In some cases, their already fragile economies were disrupted by civil conflict, while others were weakened by the collapse of the price of their exports. Debts attracted huge loans which had to be repaid on a regular basis. It is impossible to explain, in a complete sense, the enormous importance of these developments in this article, except to emphasise the most significant results as they relate to the understanding of warlords. The combination of loan repayment obligations and the diminishing value of state assets removed executive power from the governments of nation-states. National institutions such as trade unions, parliaments and the media were supplanted by international influences exercised by transnational corporations, international broadcasting agencies, the global currency market and international development agencies. Even the most intimate responsibilities of the state for law and order, welfare, education and health were now subjected to international scrutiny. Another consequence of this crisis was the widening of the gap between rich and poor. In sub-Saharan Africa, gross domestic product decreased from an average of 14 per cent of that enjoyed by most industrialised states, to between 5 and 8 per cent.<sup>17</sup> It was now possible for a more globalised society to see with great clarity the scale of inequality, the enormous wealth of the rich nations and the wretchedness of the poor. The concept of a global marketplace touched the warlord and his immediate environment. The speed and volume of capital flows from one country to another had no antecedent in the old strategic paradigm. Electronic money at the rate of more than a trillion dollars each day now passed from one side of the world to another at the click of mouse, destabilising the solid economies of one state in favour of a market trend in another.<sup>18</sup> Some felt that a global community which condoned the inequality that resulted from free markets, which exposed the weakest to the mercies of volatile economies must also expect that the most deprived elements of that society would find a way of striking back in due course.<sup>19</sup>

## THE NEW WAR ZONE

The new manifestation of the warlord emerged gradually before the end of the Cold War as local faction leaders adapted their role in longstanding conflict areas such as Burma, Colombia, Cambodia, Afghanistan and parts of sub-Saharan Africa to meet the changing environment. The dramatic end of the bipolar strategic era and the swift collapse of the Soviet empire accelerated these changes. New states such as Georgia, Tajikistan and Moldova were sickly bodies from the outset, weakened by identity politics and collapsing infrastructures. Yugoslavia, already growing weaker and weaker in the late 1980s, now fell apart under the stress of Milosovic's messages of violence and sectarianism. In sub-Saharan Africa, extreme poverty and the removal of superpower interest accelerated the collapse of terminally weakened states. Each of these conflict zones had its individual characteristics, its own versions of humanitarian disasters and the collapse of power. But in most cases, there were also the common factors of extreme poverty, massive civil displacement, huge civilian casualty figures and a state government whose writ had gradually shrunk back to the capital city. It was in the spaces created by this withdrawal of power — in the no-go areas — that the new warlords appeared. The 1990s warlord was responding to a new field of global pressures, opportunities and stresses. Broadly speaking, his traditionally negative role in society remained largely unchanged, he was still the hyena of the conflict zone, lacking the courage or the long-term commitment to confront the strong and, instead, preying off the weak and sickly, ensuring his survival by living within a territory that he could secure in a military sense. But in his new environment, he could no longer ignore the attractions of global compression and its tendency to reach into the sanctuary of his territory.

A characteristic of the post-Cold War era was the greatly increased civilian presence and involvement of every kind. Statistics since World War I showed a steady inversion from a vast majority of military to civilian casualties, to the present era, where civil casualties are proportionally enormous in comparison to those of the military<sup>20</sup> (except in the isolated statistics of the Iran-Iraq war). To a much greater extent than before, the control of the civilian population was a primary objective of the warlord. He would remove the element of the population that might succour his opponents and surround himself with friendly communities. The forcible removal or extermination of the opposing elements of the civil population institutionalised the casual violence which had been so destructive in the Chinese context. There was also a greatly increased international presence. On the whole, the new warlords (as opposed to their rank and file) were remarkably astute in their relations with international military

organisations. They were usually smart enough to sense the possibility of retribution even if they molested apparently unarmed but uniformed observers. Apart from the fairly well-known and highly attributable cases where international observers were taken and beaten or executed, there were few incidents of physical conflict between warlords and international military observers.<sup>21</sup>

Another dimension of the new conflict zone was the hugely increased involvement of international emergency relief and long-term development programmes. The warlords had less respect for international agencies that had to operate in the territory which they controlled. Not only were they extremely adept at seizing the cargoes that were useful, but they did it in many cases in a way that encouraged the flow of relief to continue. In the Horn of Africa warlords even organised subunits of their factions to interface with the aid communities which were "... *versed in the aid-speak of empowerment, capacity building and civil society.*"<sup>22</sup> This rapacious approach towards international relief and development agencies included sacrosanct organisations like the Red Cross and the UN. The humanitarian community which, to some extent, had emerged from the Cold War traditions of a regulated battle field where armies respected non-combatants, was initially shocked and caught off guard by this development. It confronted their neutral status and moral position which had previously elevated them from the military imbroglios and protected their activities. The warlord had involved them, their options for neutrality were reduced, they were not only a key element of the solution, but now also part of the problem.

Another distinction of the new warlords was the nature of their military activities. In China, where there was a great deal of intensive warfare between armed factions and government forces, the threat of combat meant that, if a warlord wished to survive, he had to organise his faction as an effective military unit. The more successful warlords had understood this and adopted the benefits of the European military reforms and technology. As a result, in the documentation and photography that survived, they had the appearance and structure of military forces that could engage effectively in combat.

However, post-Cold War irregular forces do not have uniformly developed warfare capabilities. At the 'exceptionally professional' end of a spectrum could be the rebel forces of the Eritrean civil war whose military organisation was legendary. However, they barely fit the definition of a warlord's faction. The majority of the warlord forces of sub-Saharan Africa lie at the opposing end of the spectrum and do not have the attitude or structure of effective military units. They rely instead on their frightening behaviour and appearance, and their combat effectiveness is largely symbolic. They are organised around the magnetism of their leaders, which implies that they do not have to rely on a rigorously maintained warfare capability for their survival. Why not? — perhaps because the forces at the lower end of the spectrum spend little time in a posture of military deployment, or on force engagements with the intensity of ammunition and logistic expenditure that would approach the definition of warfare. To trained military observers that were involved locally, they did not have the organisation or demeanour of units determined to take part in serious fighting. Their appearance and aggression were in the style of a force that did not expect to be contested.<sup>23</sup> Certainly, they were menacing and killed many people, but very seldom in the heat of a conflict with another armed force. In many cases, a warlord conceded to the presence of a challenging warlord by withdrawing out of harm's way rather than be engaged in the mutual destruction of combat. Observers have suggested that this careful avoidance of a mutual engagement was dictated by a mutual recognition of each other's territory and resource exploitation interests.<sup>24</sup>

Western politicians and communicators, however, often failed to see that the warlord could nevertheless be very dangerous in other ways and was unlikely to expose himself to intervention forces in a confrontation. The warlord has many other options for the use of force. Firm military action by international forces against warlord bands has had mixed results. A well-organised warlord was capable of absorbing a defeat in one district and executing his revenge at another venue. General Rose explained the problem in the Bosnia context. He maintained that, unless there was a uniformity of purpose right across all the elements of the international presence, it was dangerous for the military to go on the offensive against a particular faction while other agencies in the same area were still operating under fragile neutrality arrangements. Furthermore, Aideed's offensive in Mogadishu<sup>25</sup> and

Taylor's campaign against ECOMOG troops in Liberia proved that, in some cases, warlords were capable of concerted military action against intervention forces.

At the lowest level of the warlord gang, in the group of ten to twenty faction fighters, the gang culture of the post-Cold War era was not vastly different from its Chinese antecedents. The faction fighters had the same predatory lifestyle, preying on the weak so long as there could be no threat of reprisal. There was also the same brutality in their relationships with each other and with civilians. In 1993, Professor Delvin Walker, an agriculturist, found himself trapped in the NPFL-held town of Gbarnger in Liberia. Here he watched the new recruits being indoctrinated and brutalised at the NPFL training centre. His observations provided the basis for UNOMIL's rehabilitation strategy.<sup>26</sup> The effects of this treatment were similar to those observed by Lary in China, where the brutality of their superiors licenced the young recruits' own brutality towards civilians. Recruits in some West African factions were also forced to reject the influence of their traditional family and village hierarchy. In some cases, indoctrination required them to commit atrocities against their own communities. In many instances, recruits had to be renamed as if to throw off the ties of family tradition and adopt warrior names.<sup>27</sup> This detachment from their social context probably made them more effective as fighters, but less responsible for their terrible conduct. The new warlords also committed the same atrocities, rape, vandalism and serial looting as the Chinese warlords before them.

## ASSESSMENT OF THE MOTIVES OF THE NEW WARLORD

So far, there have been two assessment phases of the 1990s version of warlordism. In the first phase, the world media — using a similarly sensational approach as the correspondents in China 80 years before them — reacted with outrage to the activities of warring factions around the world. "*Must it go on?*", demanded *Time Magazine* in red letters on its front cover across the photograph of semi-naked Muslims behind the wires of a Serbian detention camp.<sup>28</sup> The initial response was that the warlords were mostly mindless barbarians bent on dragging the population which lived in the areas they controlled back to a dark age of tribalism. West Africa was reverting to the Africa of the Victorian atlas, its governments withering away, replaced by the rise of tribal and regional domains, the unchecked spread of disease and the growing pervasiveness of war.<sup>29</sup> This first phase of assessment was, not surprisingly, fairly superficial. It was largely an emotive response to the horrible images of warlordism that were widely used, not only by the media, but also by the relief agencies as a funding expedient on the media.

The second phase of assessment, which continues to unfold, is led by a group of mainly humanitarians, writing under the banner of the 'economy of civil war'.<sup>30</sup> In some cases, individuals had direct experience of the subject, having had to work with, survive and reconcile their humanitarian agenda with the activities of the warlord operating in his own environment where he could disregard almost all the pressures and negotiating ploys of the international community. It is hard to do justice to the writers focusing on the 'economies of civil war' in the space of this article which aims to a wider canvas. Perhaps, because of the comparative homogeneity of their experience, they largely agreed on several key issues. Firstly, the warlord was not a mindless barbarian returning an ungoverned population back to a tribal phase in their evolution. The warlord might be a negative phenomenon, perhaps even evil, but there was nothing mindless or irrational about his behaviour. He followed a ruthless logic in his activities. He was a product of his time and of his environment, intensely modern, not regressive or backward looking.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, the warlord was above all exploiting the same global marketplace and universal culture that increasingly dominated organised society in the world at large. It was this overwhelming commercial motive, this international dimension of his operations that distinguished the new warlord from his Chinese antecedents. The proposition that warlords were not (using Keegan's definition<sup>32</sup>) *true* warriors who would stand and fight in a disciplined, Clausewitzian manner, but *real* warriors who followed a Cossack fighting tradition and saw war as an opportunity for profit and as a way of life, was not new. What was new about these new warlords, and was exhaustively reported by the second phase of writers, was that their commercial agenda had become extremely sophisticated, in some cases involving huge international trading accounts. The warlord was still an extractive presence within his territory, his fighters continued to loot in a physical sense for personal and logistic purposes. However, in many cases, an additional dimension of a warlord's wealth was derived from much larger deals in which the state's natural resources — gold, diamonds, gemstones, hardwood timber, fisheries, latex, even bananas and coffee — were traded on international markets. The new warlord was now able to gain wealth far in excess of the day-to-day

spoils that were the expectations of a traditional plunderer. Warlords were not alone in exploiting these resources. Private security companies, elements of international forces and even rulers of weak states were also involved. The value of these unseen trading accounts and the relative ease with which most of these commodities could be removed and transacted, influenced the size and configuration of a warlord's warfare needs and dictated his priorities for survival.

## CONCLUSIONS

The warlord is a virus of the new strategic era. In the same way that the political and social conditions of the 1950s and 1960s encouraged a wide variety of insurgent movements, so the warlord is the logical consequence of the post-Cold War developments. The combination of failing states, societies in transition, globalised markets, easy communications, improved transport technology and unprotected national resources has propagated new plunderers. The warlord faction in the definition of this article is not the same as the Mafia gang. Although the latter increasingly takes advantage of the same global market place,<sup>33</sup> the Mafia live as citizens of a free society in most cases, and their freedom to move and communicate is not guaranteed by their own military strength, but by the institutions of their host state. Nor is the warlord to be confused with the insurgent. The former deals with the local population in a rapine and predatory manner, the latter has to use the population as its resource. The insurgent may use some of the trading techniques of the warlord, but if he is really an insurgent with a long-term political agenda, he will return to a political endgame in which he will have to submit himself to the electorate. The warlord, as defined above, is a wholly negative phenomenon. There is, so far, no mitigating, Robin Hood tendency which might show him to be a redresser of global inequality. It is therefore inconsistent to uphold the values of civil society and, at the same time, define the warlord in the anodyne circumlocutions of the politically correct as a 'non-state actor'. The warlord is a warlord. Until there is evidence to the contrary, it is a way of life that confronts every aspiration of civil society. If the choice is made for civil society, the warlord cannot be condoned by using soft focus expressions to describe his status in the war zone.

The international community has not yet developed a language and an approach to tackle the warlord, its political leaders are influenced by a deeply rooted statist culture which cannot see the crises of the new strategic era in their elemental terms. Instead of addressing the realities of the war zone, they create an alternative version of the crisis which is politically more comfortable, where warlords are disarmed, faction fighters return to their factories, elections are freely and fairly held, and soon after, the troops return home. This version of reality fails above all to understand the significance of the warlord, his urge to survive, his network of vested interests and his imperative to resist a peace process at all costs. The international community must take a more robust and inquisitive approach towards warlords, its response should be graduated and targeted. It is still the case that heads of state and the barons of the humanitarian world can afford to take an absolute and condemnatory view of warlords, whereas at the lowest level of their organisations, the soldier and the aid worker at the hostile road block have to be much more accommodating. However, this does not excuse the international community from making a greater effort to cut off the warlord's access to the global marketplace, proscribing his trading accounts and blacklisting his exports. To some extent, this has been done successfully in the case of illicit diamond traders in Angola. A much more systemic approach is needed that would drive the warlord out of the lucrative markets into a more competitive area of the grey economy where returns are lower, competition is more dangerous, life is harsher and peace settlements seem more attractive.

## Endnotes

This is an edited version of a contribution to T Woodhouse (ed), *Warlords, hawks and doves*, special issue of *International Peacekeeping*, Spring/Summer 2000. Published by kind permission of the editors.

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16. A Alao, J Mackinlay & 'F Olonosakin, *Peacekeepers, politicians and warlords*, United Nations University Press, Tokyo, 1999, p 48.
17. E Hobsbawn, *Age of extremes*, Abacus, London, 1997, pp 422-426.
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19. Editorial, *Observer*, 2 January 2000, p 24.
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21. In Rwanda, Liberia Cambodia and less attributably in Tajikistan, UN military observers, and in the case of Liberia, ECOMOG soldiers, were executed, murdered, beaten and humiliated. These are well documented exceptions to the tendency that warlords do not attack international military observers.
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