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THE STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF CRISIS AND VIOLENCE IN AFRICA¹

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INTRODUCTION

The “CNN factor” tends to mobilise pressure at the peak of the problem - which is to say, at the very moment when effective intervention is most costly, most dangerous and least likely to succeed. Kofi Annan, then United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, 1996 (quoted in Evans, 1997, 12).

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been considerable progress towards the achievement of peace and stability in southern Africa. Nevertheless, much of the African continent remains afflicted by appalling levels of underdevelopment, poverty and internecine conflict. At the time of writing, Sierra Leone, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan, Burundi and a host of other countries are wracked by violence. The notion of an African Renaissance, promoted by South African President Thabo Mbeki, may represent a compelling vision but it does not reflect the current reality or the foreseeable future.

The international community’s efforts to stem and reverse the tide of war in Africa derive in large measure from humanitarian concerns about massive human suffering, especially when the “drama” of war is depicted graphically by CNN and other media. However, the moral impulse to alleviate suffering does not constitute a sufficient basis for action. External interventions must also be based on a pragmatic assessment of their potential effectiveness. Such assessment obviously depends on the specific history and context of the countries and regions in crisis. Less obviously, perhaps, it depends on how the problems of “conflict” and “crisis”, and the desired goal of “peace”, are conceived at a more general level.

This is not a question of idle theorising while Africa burns. Every intervention by foreign actors is based on a set of theoretical assumptions, whether or not those assumptions are

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explicit and sound. If the problem or the remedy is misconceived, then peace endeavours may be ineffectual or counter-productive. Since the international community has not achieved great success in peacemaking and peacebuilding on the continent, this chapter adopts a radical stance, both in the sense of challenging conventional wisdoms and in the sense of focusing on the causes of intra-state crises.

The first part of this chapter presents a conceptual framework for understanding conflict, peace and crisis. I argue that violence may be a central concern from a humanitarian perspective, but that for analytical and strategic purposes it should be regarded as a *symptom* of intra-state crises. These crises arise from four structural conditions in particular: authoritarian rule; the exclusion of minorities from governance; socio-economic deprivation combined with inequity; and weak states that lack the institutional capacity to manage normal political and social conflict. These conditions – the “four horsemen of the apocalypse” – are the *primary causes* of large-scale violence. Sustainable peace is possible only if they are addressed in a meaningful way. The second part of this chapter considers the strategic implications of this argument, and outlines ten propositions relating to peacemaking and peacebuilding in Africa. The argument is illustrated mainly with examples from South Africa and from the Zairean rebellion of 1996.

RETHINKING CONFLICT, PEACE AND CRISIS

Many people and organisations regard conflict as an intrinsically negative dynamic. In the discourse of the United Nations (UN), the term “conflict” usually refers to armed hostilities between or within states (e.g., Boutros-Ghali, 1992; United Nations, 1998). This perspective is inaccurate and misleading. Daily newspapers are filled with stories about political, social, economic and institutional conflict that is not violent. Conflict is inevitable, commonplace and ubiquitous in all societies that comprise diverse groups. Whether these groups are defined by ethnicity, religion, ideology or class, they have different interests, needs and values. Most importantly, they have unequal access to power and resources. These differences necessarily give rise to competition and conflict, without leading inexorably to violence. Conflict is also a natural consequence of major reform and of popular pressure for fundamental political or economic change.

Our general understanding of conflict has a critical bearing on our response to its emergence in specific situations. If we consider conflict to be inherently destructive, then our efforts are bound to be directed towards suppressing or eliminating it. Such efforts are more likely to heighten than lower the level of tension. On the other hand, if we view conflict as normal and inescapable, then the challenge lies in *managing* it constructively. States that are stable are not free of conflict. Rather, they are able to deal with its various manifestations in a stable and consensual manner.

In the national context, conflict management is the essential, ongoing business of governance. It is the formal responsibility of the executive, parliament, the judiciary, the police, local authorities and other state structures. Crises arise when states do not have the institutional capacity to fulfil this responsibility. Where a state lacks the resources and expertise to resolve disputes and grievances, manage competition and protect the rights of citizens, individuals and groups may resort to violence. If the state is too weak to maintain law and order, then criminal activity and private security arrangements may flourish. Somalia and Liberia are

often cited as typical examples of this problem in Africa, but they are better seen as extreme cases on a continuum of weak states throughout the continent.

Crises also arise when states lack popular legitimacy, either because they are wholly authoritarian under minority rule or because they exclude ethnic minorities from full participation in a democratic political system. Oppressed and marginalised communities may seek to resolve the crisis through armed rebellion. Hostilities are likely to be intense and sustained because the stakes are so high: exclusion from formal governance may have a profoundly negative impact on physical security, basic rights, cultural identity, economic opportunity and access to resources.

Just as our understanding of conflict informs the nature of peace initiatives, so too does our notion of “peace”. For the governments and inhabitants of stable Western democracies, this concept is not problematic. Defined as the absence of widespread physical violence, peace is deemed to be an unqualified good in terms of orderly politics and the sanctity of life. Since civil wars lead to extensive suffering and loss of life, it would seem obvious that the prevention and termination of warfare is a paramount goal.

The protagonists in a civil war have an entirely different outlook, however. Oppressed groups may prize freedom and justice more than peace. They may consequently be prepared to provoke and endure a high level of physical violence in order to achieve the rights of citizenship. In so far as mass resistance threatens the *status quo*, peace serves the interests of the ruling elite and its foreign sponsors. In these circumstances, the cessation of hostilities is less a goal in its own right than an outcome of the belligerents’ willingness to reach a political settlement that addresses the substantive causes of violence.

Put differently, the absence of justice is frequently the principal reason for the absence of peace. Acute injustice invariably leads to popular struggles that are met in turn by repression. Foreign powers that support dictators in the interests of “stability” (as in the case of Western support for former President Mobutu of Zaire) are simply postponing the inevitable conflagration. Both ethically and analytically, the primary goal of external and local endeavours to prevent and end civil wars is therefore best formulated as the establishment of *peace with justice*. This formulation reflects Johan Galtung’s (1969) concept of peace as encompassing both “negative peace” (defined as the absence of personal violence) and “positive peace” (defined as the absence of structural violence or the presence of social justice). In situations of systemic injustice, the attainment of peace entails radical change rather than the preservation of order.

The goal of “peace with justice” is neither simplistic nor absolute. In the course of negotiating the termination of a civil war, the adversaries have substantially different positions on the content of a just settlement. These differences relate to the tension between the aspirations of the majority and the fears of minorities; the redistribution of limited resources like land; the debate over amnesty versus prosecution in respect of past human rights violations; the future composition of the security forces; and the accommodation of “villains” who might otherwise thwart a transition to democracy. The disputant parties are obliged to compromise their maximalist demands in order to resolve these tensions. What matters greatly is whether the various parties and their constituencies consider the final settlement to be *sufficiently* just.

Justice in the socio-economic sphere is no less important than in the political arena. Where underdevelopment is coupled with extreme inequality, sporadic acts of violence may occur as

expressions of anger, frustration and fear. The pattern of urban riots in African countries suggests that the risk of violence increases when poor socio-economic conditions deteriorate rapidly and suddenly (as a result, for example, of a currency devaluation or a structural adjustment programme imposed by the International Monetary Fund); when government is corrupt and unresponsive to the needs of citizens; and when poverty and unemployment are linked to an inequitable distribution of wealth. The violent street protests in Zimbabwe during 1997-8 have been attributed to these factors (e.g., Mandaza, 1997; Mtetwa, 1998). In 1998, Archbishop Desmond Tutu issued the following warning to the South African government: "The surest recipe for unrest and turmoil is if the vast majority have no proper homes, clean water, electricity, good education and adequate health care. ...If the disadvantaged, the poor, the homeless and unemployed become desperate, they may use desperate means to redress the imbalance" (Cape Times, 27 February 1998).

Whereas political actors equate a crisis with actual or imminent hostilities (e.g., Boutros-Ghali, 1992, 16–17, 33; Eliasson, 1995), intra-state crises and violence are better understood as related but distinct phenomena. A society that is vulnerable to being overwhelmed by violence is a society that is already in deep crisis. As indicated above, violence is typically a *manifestation* of a structural crisis, being either a deliberate and organised reaction thereto or a spontaneous and sporadic outcome thereof. Michael Brecher (1996, 128) draws a similar distinction at the inter-state level: "In short, a crisis can erupt, persist and terminate with or without violence. War does not eliminate or replace crisis. Rather, crisis is accentuated by war. Viewed in these terms, war is a continuation of crisis by other means."

The distinction between intra-state crises and violence can be illustrated by the Banyamulenge uprising that began in eastern Zaire in 1996 and resulted in the overthrow of Mobutu. The international community regarded the rebellion as a major political and humanitarian crisis. The UN Secretary-General and a number of Western states and relief agencies called for the rapid deployment of a multinational military force to protect the Hutu refugees from Rwanda who were housed in refugee camps in eastern Zaire (Evans, 1997, Chapter 2). For the Banyamulenge, a minority Tutsi community, the components of the crisis lay elsewhere: a provincial governor's decision to expel them from Zaire where they had lived for two hundred years; the revocation of their citizenship in 1981; the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi minority in neighbouring Rwanda in 1994; and the brutality and neglect of Mobutu's reign over three decades. For the Tutsi government of Rwanda, which orchestrated and drove the insurrection in Zaire, the principal threat was Mobutu's support for the genocidal *Interahamwe* and the presence of these Hutu militia in the refugee camps (Evans, 1997; Solomon, 1997). The rebellion was thus an attempt, albeit unsuccessful, to *resolve* a set of crises of significant proportions.

In conclusion, an intra-state crisis can be defined as a set of structural conditions that pose a fundamental threat to human security and the stability of the state, and that create the potential for large-scale violence. To summarise, the critical structural conditions in Africa are authoritarian rule; the marginalisation of ethnic minorities; socio-economic deprivation and inequity; and weak states that lack the institutional capacity to manage political and social conflict effectively. The potential for violence rises when these conditions are present simultaneously, mutually reinforcing and exacerbated by other structural problems. In Africa, such problems include the lack of coincidence between nation and state as a result of the colonial imposition of borders; the colonial legacy of divide-and-rule ethnic policies; unstable civil-military relations; land, environmental and demographic pressures; arms supplies and

other forms of foreign support to authoritarian regimes; the debt burden; and the imbalance in economic power and trade between the South and the North.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The preceding discussion on peace, conflict and crisis has a range of implications for strategy in general and for determining appropriate courses of action in specific situations. These implications are considered below in the form of ten propositions relating to peacemaking and peacebuilding. The propositions are organised around the focus, timing, type and form of intervention by the UN and other international actors.

Focus of intervention

1. It is necessary to focus more on the structural causes of violence than on violence per se.

This assertion runs directly counter to the conventional approach to “early warning” and “crisis prevention”. In the realm of international politics, early warning is primarily concerned with the initiation and escalation of intra- and inter-state hostilities. Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992, 15-16) declared that the aim of early warning is to “assess whether a threat to peace exists and to analyse what action might be taken by the United Nations to alleviate it”. According to International Alert (1996), the goal is to predict trends toward an intensification of violence in order to protect vulnerable sectors of society against gross human rights violations, terror and genocide.

The early warning/action model proposed by John Davies and Ted Gurr (1998, 4–5) regards the structural causes of violence as “background conditions” or “tensions”. These form the basis for “long-term risk assessment” of a “potential crisis” and point to opportunities for pre-crisis development aid, peacebuilding or peacemaking initiatives. “Dynamic early warning” is intended to identify “accelerator events” that exacerbate the tensions and indicate the possibility that a “full-blown crisis” or “conflagration” will occur “within the coming months or weeks”. Accelerator events can include arms acquisitions, incidents of aggressive posturing or low-intensity violence, a crop failure, a major currency devaluation, and new repressive or discriminatory policies.

The early warning model’s emphasis on large-scale violence reflects a misdiagnosis of the problem. It implies that the outbreak of hostilities is the worst-case scenario when, as illustrated by the Banyamulenge uprising and many other rebellions against authoritarian rule, resort to violence may be an act of desperation in response to a perceived worst-case scenario. On humanitarian grounds alone, Zaire fell into the category of “worst case scenario” prior to the 1996 rebellion: state hospitals and health facilities were virtually non-existent; preventable and curable diseases accounted for at least 50% of all deaths; child and maternal mortality rates were among the highest in the world; and inflation reached 24 000% in 1994 (Shearer, 1999). Paradoxically, the international community’s preoccupation with hostilities and its lesser concern with structural violence might contribute to oppressed communities becoming increasingly militant.

An emphasis on the proximate causes of violence similarly reflects a misreading of the core problem. Many countries may experience the events described as “accelerators” but they are not equally susceptible to being engulfed by violence as a result. It is scarcely conceivable

that, say, Canada, Belgium or New Zealand would be plunged into civil war following a crop failure, a currency devaluation, or even the introduction of discriminatory policies. Accelerators lead to hostilities in certain states but not others precisely because they heighten the structural tensions that exist in the former. Whereas accelerator events may or may not provoke violence depending on the circumstances, these structural tensions give rise to a *societal propensity* to violence. By focusing on the proximate causes of hostilities and relegating structural issues to the status of “background conditions”, the dynamic early warning model is oriented towards crisis reaction rather than crisis prevention.

The more severe the structural problems in a given country, the greater the number of potential accelerators, the greater the risk of violence posed by such events, and the more difficult the task of determining which events warrant early warning of an incipient civil war. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it could have been said with certainty that Zaire was a country in crisis and that some kind of explosion or implosion would occur in the future. Yet who could have predicted that the process that culminated in the fall of Mobutu would begin in October 1996 and be initiated by the Banyamulenge under the leadership of Laurent Kabila in response to a decision taken by a provincial governor?

Mass violence does not occur as an independent event. It is an outcome of historically dysfunctional political relationships and structural factors that undermine human security. It cannot be prevented or terminated unless these matters are addressed to the satisfaction of local actors. This cannot be done within a time-frame of weeks or months, as suggested by Davies and Gurr (1998, 4). As argued further below, early warning and action are much too late if they are triggered by the proximate causes of violence. By this stage, the situation may have deteriorated and enmity may have mounted to the point that the momentum towards protracted warfare is irreversible.

2. It is necessary to distinguish between the symptoms and causes of intra-state crises.

Through peace operations, emergency relief and ongoing humanitarian aid, the international community mobilises substantial resources in response to violence, starvation and other symptoms of intra-state crises. While these endeavours may serve to mitigate suffering, the crises and their symptoms will persist for as long as the underlying causes prevail. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan makes this point in respect of palliative measures in central Africa: "In the Great Lakes region, immense sums have been spent on humanitarian relief in recent years, though this assistance is often perceived by countries in the region as having very little impact on the issues that lie at the heart of the problems there. Many fear that the assistance may come at the expense of efforts to address root causes..." (United Nations, 1998, 14).

Moreover, where a specific issue of concern is misdiagnosed in terms of the distinction between causes and symptoms, strategic interventions may be misdirected. This argument can be applied to the question of armaments. Many local and foreign organisations (and indeed some of the other contributors to this volume) attach a high priority to disarmament in Africa on the grounds that the abundance of weapons and other forms of militarisation promote a culture of violence, divert resources from development and perpetuate conflict. A key thesis is that disarmament can release scarce resources for socio-economic programmes and thereby enhance human security (e.g., United Nations, 1998, 7).

This thesis ignores the fact that disarmament is least likely to occur where the problems of weaponry and military spending are greatest, namely in situations of crisis. National and regional crises create a security vacuum that state and non-state actors seek to fill through violence for purposes of maintaining power, contesting power, self-protection or economic subsistence. Demilitarisation is contingent on filling the security vacuum through legitimate political processes and institutions. Good governance is thus a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for demilitarisation.² Development, human security and state stability cannot be achieved in the absence of this condition. In other words, the positive causal relationship is between good governance, security and disarmament (see Berdal, 1996; 'Bayo Adekanye, 1997; Nathan, 1998a).

It is no coincidence that the process of light weapons disarmament in Mali *followed* the ending of military rule and the resolution of the Taureg rebellion in that country (see Poulton and Youssouf, 1998). Similarly, the demilitarisation of the South African state flowed in the first instance from the reformist policies of former President De Klerk and then accelerated dramatically with the advent of democracy (see Nathan and Philips, 1992; Nathan, 1998b). Conversely, civil society in South Africa remains highly militarised, in the form of violent crime and privatised security, chiefly because the state has neither overcome the chronic weakness of its police service nor alleviated poverty and socio-economic inequity. Statistics for the period 1995–6 reveal a high correlation between crime and unemployment, and between crime and a shortage of police resources, in different provinces of South Africa (Batchelor, 1998). It should be added that the argument outlined above relates to demand-side factors and does not detract from the need for tighter controls and more restrictive policies on the part of arms-exporting countries.

Timing of intervention

3. Intra-state crises cannot be resolved quickly and easily.

Early warning/action models that seek to avert the initiation or escalation of hostilities within a matter of months or weeks fail to appreciate the complexity of intra-state crises. Anarchy, civil war and genocide are not remotely similar to a violent *incident* (such as a house burglary), which might be thwarted by prompt action before or at the moment of occurrence. They are *social phenomena* whose causes, dynamics and contested issues are multiple, deep-rooted and intractable. As a result, the prospect of preventing large-scale violence at short notice is exceedingly small.

A serious disagreement between two parties around a single parochial issue, such as a wage dispute between management and workers, is often hard to resolve. The challenge is immeasurably greater where the scope of the conflict is national; the underlying causes are structural; there is a history of intermittent violence; there are many local parties that have apparently irreconcilable values and perspectives on a host of issues; neighbouring states and foreign powers play a destructive role; and the roots of the conflict include the colonial legacy of divisive ethnic policies and arbitrary demarcation of borders.

² The term "good governance" is used by the International Monetary Fund mainly with reference to macro-economic policy. As discussed further in this chapter, it is intended here to cover the essential elements of democracy, as well as efficiency and effectiveness in the state's performance of its basic functions.

In authoritarian states and under conditions of anarchy, it may be extremely difficult to identify credible leaders. The status and bargaining power of the protagonists may derive from military strength rather than popular support, reinforcing tendencies to violence and raising doubts about the legitimacy of agreements reached. Warlords who rely on banditry as a means of subsistence may have no political claims whatsoever. Similarly, ruling elites and rebel movements may have little interest in a negotiated settlement if they are able to accrue substantial wealth from the exploitation of natural resources in territory held by force.³ Development projects that could provide an economic alternative to war are not viable while hostilities rage, and emergency aid may generate fierce competition among local actors and fuel the conflict.

Furthermore, the issues at stake relate to political, cultural or physical survival, and evoke deep feelings of fear, animosity and mistrust. Once mobilisation for killing has begun, the intensity of emotion and resolve is such that the belligerents are unlikely to be amenable to compromise or receptive to diplomatic efforts. Nor are they likely to be deterred by the threat or use of force if they are already willing to die for their cause. Their resistance to external peace initiatives will be heightened if the foreign powers now engaged in peacemaking previously ignored or contributed to their plight. In all probability, the external initiatives will be pre-empted or overwhelmed by the rapidity and ferocity of local developments.

Most of these trends were evident in the Banyamulenge uprising of 1996. The orchestration of the rebellion by the government of Rwanda was clearly influenced by the failure of the international community to deal with the fundamental security threat posed by the *Interahamwe*. France, which vociferously promoted the idea of a multinational military mission to protect the Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire, was viewed with particular disdain in the light of its previous military support to both Mobutu and the Rwandese forces responsible for the genocide in 1994. Discussion about a multinational mission was still underway when the "crisis", as defined by the international community, was resolved: the majority of refugees returned to Rwanda and Mobutu fled the country as the rebels seized Kinshasa (Evans, 1997, Chapter 2).

The UN's second operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) in 1993 provides a more dramatic example of the limitations of "quick fix" solutions to intra-state crises. The launch of the operation was heralded by Madeleine Albright, then Ambassador of the United States to the UN, as "an unprecedented enterprise aimed at nothing less than the restoration of an entire country as a proud, functioning and viable member of the community of nations" (quoted in Jan, 1996, 3). Given the severity of inter-clan rivalry and the total collapse of the Somali state, this goal was patently unattainable within the designated time-frame of nine months. In the comparatively less complicated cases of Mozambique and South Africa, formal negotiations, which followed lengthy periods of indirect talks, were conducted over 27 months and four years respectively.

³ Some commentators have argued that commercial interests, rather than the structural factors emphasised in this chapter, are the driving force behind many of the civil wars in Africa. It cannot be disputed that the accumulation of wealth (through mining of minerals and diamond smuggling, for example) has contributed to the perpetuation of hostilities and inhibited the conclusion of peace settlements in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In these and other civil wars, however, commercial interests were not the cause of hostilities in the first instance. Nor does the pursuit or frustration of such commercial interests give rise to a societal propensity to large-scale violence.

The UN undertook a comprehensive analysis of conditions in Somalia only after the mission was well underway, it did not comprehend the magnitude and complexity of the crisis, and its misjudgements regarding the authority and legitimacy of local leaders contributed to numerous set-backs (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung *et al.*, 1995). Driven by schedules set in New York and lacking a thorough grasp of traditional reconciliation processes, the UN worked against rather than with indigenous forms of conflict management (Menkhaus, 1996; Jan, 1996). Following the use of force by the UN against certain Somali factions, the organisation became too discredited to pursue its mediation efforts and left Somalia in ignominy.

4. Intra-state crises do not end with the cessation of warfare.

In spite of a professed commitment to “post-conflict peacebuilding”, the UN and other international actors are preoccupied with emerging and full-blown civil wars. The “CNN factor” referred to at the beginning of this chapter does not only entail passivity until a crisis finally explodes. In the aftermath of a war, external actors move too quickly to the next conflagration. In South Africa, for example, foreign donors substantially reduced their transitional financial aid after the country’s second democratic election in 1999. Notwithstanding a history of three centuries of oppression and exploitation, South Africa was perceived to have largely accomplished its transition to democracy within a five-year period!

Just as a crisis precedes the outbreak of violence, so that crisis persists long after a peace agreement has been reached. During the Liberian civil war, regional enforcement operations led to as many as fourteen short-lived peace accords between 1990 and 1995 (Nyakyi, 1998). Nor is the crisis over when a democratically elected government has been installed. The introduction of democracy in southern African states has not in itself resolved the structural problems of weak states, underdevelopment, socio-economic inequity and unstable civil-military relations. The Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), whose war since 1998 has been unprecedented in regional scope, demonstrates unequivocally that intra-state crises will endure for as long as the conditions that threaten human security and engender violence prevail (see Shearer, 1999).

Type of intervention

5. Peacebuilding strategies are the only viable means of preventing and resolving a crisis.

The type of intervention most commonly associated with early warning is preventive diplomacy. In *An Agenda for Peace*, Boutros-Ghali (1992, 11-19) defined preventive diplomacy as "action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur." The aim is to "resolve disputes before violence breaks out" or "if conflict breaks out, to act swiftly to contain it and resolve its underlying causes." The relevant strategies include confidence-building measures, fact-finding, early warning, preventive military deployment and the creation of demilitarised zones.

These strategies may succeed in forestalling violence in an inter-state dispute but they are scarcely likely to avert a looming civil war. The complexity of internal crises puts them way outside the category of a “dispute” whose causes can be dealt with through confidence-building or military deployment. Stephen Stedman (1995) argues that the post-Cold War enthusiasm for preventive diplomacy rests on the false assumption that there are easy solutions to the kind of disaster that afflicted Somalia, Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The post-

mortem assertions that these disasters could have been pre-empted by more robust international action ignore the financial costs of such action, as well as the risk, not only of failure, but also of exacerbating the situation. In any event, counter-factual assertions are inherently speculative and unprovable.

Michael Lund (1995, 161-162) claims that Stedman ignores those cases where preventive diplomacy has indeed kept political disputes from degenerating into armed hostilities and enabled the relatively peaceful management of potentially violent ethnic and national disputes. He contends that such cases include "US and European pressure on Zaire's President Mobutu to step down" and "Congo's transition from autocracy". Yet neither of these examples supports Lund's claim. Mobutu did not step down as a result of diplomatic pressure; he fled the capital as his army was routed by the rebels; and the Democratic Republic of Congo has been wracked by intense fighting over the past five years.

The strategies that properly address the root causes of intra-state crises and violence encompass institutionalising respect for human rights, political pluralism and the rule of law; accommodating minorities and ethnic diversity; strengthening the capacity of state institutions; and promoting economic growth and equity. Although Boutros-Ghali (1992, 32-38) described these measures as "post-conflict peacebuilding", they should equally be regarded as "pre-conflict" imperatives. Boutros-Ghali later observed that peacebuilding could be undertaken as a preventative measure (United Nations, 1995), but the term "post-conflict peacebuilding" remains prevalent in the discourse of the UN (e.g., United Nations, 1998, 14). The notion of "pre-conflict" and "post-conflict" scenarios is inadequate, moreover, since one of the essential elements of peacebuilding is the *on-going* management of social and political conflict through good governance. The most appropriate peacebuilding strategies depend on the circumstances of each country. For example, development and institutional capacity-building are priorities in emerging democracies but may be counter-productive in authoritarian states.

6. Good governance requires efficiency and effectiveness on the part of state institutions.

Good governance is not limited to the cardinal features of democracy: free and fair elections, accountability, transparency and respect for pluralism and human rights. It also entails efficiency and effectiveness in fulfilling the functions of the state. These qualities are missing in most African countries, which lack the skills, expertise, infrastructure and resources to meet the welfare and other security needs of citizens. In the absence of the requisite institutional capacity, the values and principles of democracy will not be realised, the security vacuum will not be filled, and resort to force by the state and sectors of civil society may consequently become commonplace.

By way of example, adherence to the rule of law presupposes the existence of a competent and fair judiciary, police service and criminal justice system. The expectation that police personnel should respect human rights is unrealistic if they have not been trained in techniques other than use of force. Democratic civil-military relations depend not only on the organisational culture of the armed forces but also on the expertise of departments of defence and parliamentary defence committees. Illegal trafficking in small arms will not be stemmed through policy and legislative measures if governments are unable to control the movement of people and goods across their borders. In these and other areas, the building of capacity is necessarily a long-term endeavour.

By way of further example, foreign politicians and analysts have expressed unease over the continued deployment of the South African army in an internal policing role. This concern relates to the politicisation of the armed forces and to the militarisation of government's law and order function. These considerations are well known to a South African audience and are captured in official documents (e.g., Republic of South Africa, 1996, 37–38). Nevertheless, the practical problem of an inefficient, corrupt and poorly trained police service, unable to cope with the high incidence of violent crime, necessitates ongoing military deployment.

7. Political stability requires structural accommodation of diversity.

Western states attach great importance to multi-party democracy as a vital component of peacemaking and peacebuilding in Africa. The core assumption is that this system serves the interests of all political parties and their constituencies. If a party loses an election, its ability to protect and advance the interests of its constituency may be somewhat diminished but is not entirely undermined. Elections thus provide for a stable transfer of power according to the changing preferences of voters.

In many African countries, the core assumption is invalid. Where political parties are organised along ethnic lines and the electoral system is based on the principle of “winner-takes-all”, political arrangements that guarantee formal equality may reinforce existing inequalities. Minorities may be excluded completely and permanently from parliament and other structures of governance.⁴ The negative impact is severe because, as noted earlier, access to political power determines economic opportunity, resource distribution and physical security. The de facto result may be as deleterious to minorities as outright oppression.

Minorities, whether they hold power in an authoritarian state or are marginalised in a democracy, may consequently believe that violence is their only means of survival. In some instances they may oppose democratic norms for ideological or venal reasons. Yet it is often the case that they have no faith in these norms for the ironic but pragmatic reason that they have little to gain and everything to lose in a democracy. In order to prevent and resolve crises that emanate from inter-group conflict, democratic majoritarianism must therefore be tempered by structural accommodation of diversity.

Structural accommodation encompasses formal means of entrenching inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the political system, state institutions and the law. It aims to protect minorities against abuse of power and provide them with some access to power. These goals can be met through mechanisms that do not negate the aspirations of the majority or undermine the fundamental tenets of democracy. In the case of post-apartheid South Africa, such mechanisms include an electoral system based on proportional representation; a government of national unity; the integration of apartheid and liberation armies; constitutional protection of human rights, including rights related to language, culture and religion; and the authority of independent courts to overrule Cabinet and Parliament where legislation or executive decisions are inconsistent with the Constitution.⁵

⁴ It is for this reason that “exclusion of minorities” is treated as a structural problem separate from “authoritarian rule” (in which the majority of the population is subjugated).

⁵ A further argument against multi-party democracy, articulated chiefly by officials from non-democratic regimes, is that this system is a Western construct unsuited to the culture and ethnic diversity of African countries. The argument usually confuses the form of democracy, which must be adapted to local circumstances, with the essence of democracy, which seeks to entrench the rights and freedoms for which millions of Africans

Form of intervention

8. Peacemaking and peacebuilding are primarily the responsibility of local rather than foreign actors.

International organisations and foreign powers should abandon the illusion that they are responsible for resolving intra-state crises. For better or worse, this function must be undertaken principally by local actors. Peacemaking and peacebuilding are not sustainable unless their form and content are shaped and embraced by these actors. While individuals and groups embroiled in conflict are obviously concerned about physical and economic security, they also crave respect, acknowledgement and affirmation. They want to be involved in decisions that affect their lives and they resent being treated as the object of some other body's plans. The success of South Africa's transition to democracy arguably lies less in the details of its negotiated settlement than in the fact that those details were determined exclusively by South Africans.

In many African civil wars, however, international mediators tend to focus more on solutions than process. They press for rapid results and endeavour to win the parties' consent to their proposals. The most extreme version of this approach entails the application of coercive leverage through sanctions or military force. Whatever the utility of leverage in a given situation, mediators undermine their credibility and effectiveness when they take such steps. In addition to alienating the targeted party, they are unlikely to achieve any outcome that requires the long-term co-operation of that party (see Nathan, 1999). Accords concluded under duress will have scant value in the absence of a genuine commitment to peace and reconciliation. Democracy cannot logically or practically be imposed on a society.

In light of the above, external interventions should be reoriented from the delivery of products to the facilitation of processes. In the context of peacemaking, this would entail supporting national dialogue and problem-solving rather than prescribing solutions based on Western models. In the case of peacebuilding, efforts should be directed towards strengthening the capacity of government and civil society through the transfer of skills and knowledge. Literally and metaphorically, teaching local communities to build bridges is more useful than building bridges for them. The process is even more useful if it draws on local expertise and is not reliant on foreign technology. It is nevertheless useless if communities want dams rather than bridges. The greatest need for capacity-building in African states is in the spheres of national and local governance.⁶

have struggled. For an exemplary statement on democracy, see the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted by the Organisation of African Unity's Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 1981 (see Amnesty International, 1991).

⁶ The emphasis on the state, here and elsewhere in this chapter, has been criticised on the grounds that it ignores both the importance of civil society and the oppressive character of many African states. South Africa provides a good example of non-governmental actors making a positive contribution to peacemaking and peacebuilding. Nevertheless, the security and conflict management functions of the state cannot be performed by civil society in a remotely adequate fashion. A viable state is required, at the very least, to protect people against criminal activity and acts of violence by sectors of civil society. The fact that African states are frequently the main threat to the security of their citizens constitutes an argument for democracy rather than an argument against the state.

9. International actors should practise what they preach.

International organisations and foreign powers that promote democratic norms in Africa are themselves obliged to adhere to these norms. They undermine democratic principles and incur resentment and resistance from African leaders and communities when they operate without any semblance of respect for local actors. All too often, they appear to regard Africans as objects rather than as actors. They dash to the scene of a humanitarian crisis, competing with each other to provide food and bright ideas, equipped with only a superficial understanding of local dynamics, knowing and learning nothing about local cultures, and then vanish just as suddenly when violence breaks out elsewhere.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) insist that countries that receive their grants and loans should abide by the principles of democracy, accountability and respect for human dignity. Nevertheless, these institutions have *imposed* macro-economic policies on debtor countries; they have aggravated poverty through structural adjustment programmes; they are accountable more to their Northern “shareholders” than to recipient governments in the South; and they are not held accountable for their mistakes and failed policies (see, for example, Hanlon, 1996). Between 1976 and 1994, violent protests against IMF actions occurred in as many as 26 debtor countries (Ferraro and Chenier, 1994, 288).

10. Foreign actors should do no harm.

It follows from the preceding section that the design of every external intervention in an intra-state crisis should include a rigorous assessment of the potential for that intervention to fuel conflict, intensify inequality or otherwise exacerbate the structural causes of violence. The desire to do good should be secondary to the imperative of not causing harm. In certain instances this imperative may raise excruciating dilemmas, exemplified by the presence of the genocidal militia in the Zairean refugee camps in 1995–6. In that case, humanitarian agencies had no middle option between either supporting the refugees and thereby supporting the militia, or abandoning the refugees altogether (see Evans, 1997).

In other cases the imperative of not causing harm should pose no dilemma at all. The provision of foreign aid and armaments to tyrants like Mobutu makes a mockery of pious declarations of good intent. There may be uncertainty about the best means of dislodging dictators but there is no uncertainty about the implications of propping them up. The most significant contribution that the international community could make to peacemaking and peacebuilding in Africa would be to attend to the ways in which foreign powers and multinational bodies provoke and heighten tension and violence. The critical issues in this regard include injudicious arms sales; political and economic support for authoritarian regimes; the debt crisis; structural adjustment programmes; and global trade relations.

CONCLUSION

The thrust of this chapter is that large-scale violence in the national sphere should be viewed as a manifestation of intra-state crises that arise from four structural conditions: authoritarian rule; the marginalisation of minorities; relative socio-economic deprivation; and weak states.⁷

⁷ I acknowledge the omission in this chapter of any discussion on the structural and physical violence to which women in Africa are subjected. Gender-based violence in situations of both war and peace is so severe and widespread as to justify the term “crisis”. It is also significant that women are generally excluded from

A host of vexing questions warrant more serious consideration. For example, what are the roots of these conditions and what is the relationship between them? Are weak states and underdevelopment a consequence of authoritarian rule, or is the tendency to authoritarianism a product of weak states and underdevelopment? Should conflict related to scarce resources, demographic pressures and artificial borders be regarded as a primary cause of violence or as a result of poor governance and conflict management? Are domestic and regional solutions to these problems inescapably limited by the global imbalance in political and economic power?

These and related questions are probably best answered with reference to specific countries and sub-regions. Whatever the answers though, the essential point is that intra-state crises and violence cannot be prevented or resolved without tackling their root causes in a meaningful way. There are no easy and obvious solutions, and the dilemmas and obstacles are many and formidable. Early warning and preventive diplomacy in response to the proximate causes of hostilities are generally much too late. By that stage, conditions are likely to have deteriorated and bellicosity to have escalated to the point that warfare is inevitable.

The international community's preoccupation with large-scale violence is not simply a product of compelling real-time media coverage, as implied by the notion of the "CNN factor." As summarised in Table 1, the preoccupation with violence is built into the conceptual and policy framework of international actors. It should be replaced with an alternative approach that focuses on the structural causes of violence.

Table 1**Distinction between conventional and alternative approaches to early warning and intra-state crises**

<u>Phenomena</u>	<u>Conventional classification</u>	<u>Alternative classification</u>
Large-scale violence	Crisis	Manifestation of a crisis
Structural tensions/ root causes of violence	Background conditions for long-term risk assessment	Early warning for crisis prevention + resolution
Accelerator events	Early warning for crisis prevention	Early warning for crisis reaction
Peace	Absence of physical violence	Presence of political + social justice

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