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From Angola to Zimbabwe

Conflict Resolution
and Governance in Africa

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From Angola to Zimbabwe: Conflict Resolution and Governance in Africa

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A report of a conference held jointly by the
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From Angola to Zimbabwe: Conflict Resolution and Governance in Africa

Greg Mills and Tim Hughes¹

Introduction

The conference on which this report is based, was conceived for two related reasons. First, to identify the causes of African conflicts so as to devise ways of preventing and resolving such conflicts. There is a need to learn from past mediation experiences, and to assess the role that can be played by multilateral institutions and non-governmental organisations in conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

Second, to sketch out a means or 'logic' of African political stability and economic recovery. In this, a number of questions stand out: What role should the external community have in assisting this process of recovery in Africa? This question is most pertinent given the debate on the links between external assistance and African governance as articulated in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). What do we understand by the term 'good governance'? What is the role of African states in meeting this criterion of good governance—and what strategies might usefully be employed in this regard? What is the relationship between democracy and conflict, democracy and conflict prevention, and democracy and development? Finally, how can interventions best be made to encourage a process of democratisation that

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extends beyond just holding elections to include the establishment of a 'culture' of political tolerance and co-existence?

These questions are far from academic in Southern Africa. Africa is poorer today than it was thirty years ago and commands a smaller share of world trade and global gross domestic product (GDP). Indeed, Africa's GDP is just one per cent of total global GDP today.

The Southern African region has reached a critical juncture in its political and economic development. Recent events in Zimbabwe and Angola bring into sharp relief the divergence in political and economic standards, norms and values, where today there are questions surrounding the democratic status of more than half of the 14 member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). There is an imperative to find strategies, mechanisms and institutions to develop, entrench and sustain a commonality—or convergence—of acceptable norms pertaining to good governance including upholding the rule of law, deepening democracy and respect for human rights, and promoting press and media freedom. Without these elements, the more optimistic and prosperous future that Africa deserves and that NEPAD potentially offers will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

The African development challenge

Ten per cent of the world's population lives in sub-Saharan Africa, and yet the total combined annual economic output of the 48 economies of sub-Saharan Africa is just \$300 million—roughly the same as that of Argentina, which has just 30 million inhabitants. South Africa's share of the region's combined annual economic output is more than 40% with a further 11% generated by Nigeria. The remaining 46 countries—with a combined population of 450 million people—survive on \$140 billion each year.

The African challenge is a complex one, rooted in history and defined by ill-formed (sometimes dysfunctional) geographic and state units. It has domestic, regional and international dimensions, relating both to its colonial history and to the nature of the continent's transition to independence. Along with the growth of corruption, nepotism, populist redistribution and patronage politics, Africa's economic decline reflects both political and institutional failure. This has manifested itself in a number of ways.

- *Political instability and conflict.* Africa has more armed conflicts than any other continent, with one in five Africans living in conditions of conflict. The Norwegian Refugee Council estimates that during the second half of 2001 the number of internally displaced persons in Africa reached 13.5 million. This is an increase of more than five million since 1998, and is more than three times Africa's estimated refugee population. While many of these conflicts are internal, many are sustained by external, cross-border linkages.
- *Skills and capital flight.* It is estimated that 60,000 doctors, engineers and university staff left Africa between 1985 and 1990, and that since 1990 this figure has been some 20,000 per year. The gap created by the loss of 30% of the continent's highly skilled workforce between 1960 and 1987 has had to be filled by expatriates. Approximately 100,000 expatriates work in Africa at an annual cost of \$4 billion (a number significantly greater than at the time independence). Africa has lost an estimated \$150 billion in capital flight, with some 40% of private wealth held outside the continent, a higher percentage than any other region in the world. In 1980, Africa accounted for 28% of global foreign direct investment flows to developing countries. By 2000, this figure had dropped to 7%.
- *Low investment returns and high transaction costs.* A combination of poor infrastructure, distant geographical location, low productivity and a high-risk environment led to lower returns (around one-third of the global average) on capital investments between 1960 and 1990. This was exacerbated by state expenditure focused principally on reinforcing patronage rather than on promoting economic growth. Although returns on African investment rose considerably in the 1990s, high transaction costs coupled with a high-risk premium have deterred many investors outside of the mining, oil and tourism sectors. The continent also accounts for less than one percent of global capital flows, declining from 4.5% a decade earlier. Put differently, Africa has failed to globalise.
- *Commodity price decline.* This was coupled with an oil price increase in 1973, which, paradoxically, African oil producers did not take advantage of mainly due to ongoing civil strife in oil-producing states. Africa's share of world commodity exports declined from 8.4% to 3.1% between 1970 and 1990, even though in 1991 commodities and fuels accounted for 24% and 60% of African exports respectively

- *Weak agricultural and manufacturing sectors.* In South and East Asia, 80% of exports in 1991 were manufactured goods. In Latin America just under two-thirds of exports were manufactured items. In 1965, manufacturing accounted for 9% of African economic activity. By the late 1980s this had increased to just 11%. The Tanzanian minister for science, technology and higher learning institutions, Alfred Chale, noted in February 2002 that weak policies, poor agricultural and farming methods, and a lack of proper marketing systems, have prevented the achievement of continental food self-sufficiency. Africa's grain deficit doubled between 2000–01, reaching 44 million tonnes, leaving the continent locked in an acute food crisis.
- *Embryonic regional units.* Although the route to global integration and competitiveness runs through regional consolidation and the harnessing of regional economies of scale, intra-regional trade (which accounted for 6% of African exports in 1990) grew to just 10% by the end of the 1990s.

However, contrary to generally held stereotypes, Africa's situation is not homogeneous. At one end of the scale is the modern, industrialised economy of South Africa—a global exporter of automobiles, services, technology and (increasingly) skills. At the other, the collapsed entities of Somalia, Liberia and Sierra Leone are characterised by outward rather than internal displays of state capacity, and by seemingly endless conflict.

Although violence is endemic and persistent in Africa, it exhibits a constantly changing and challenging dynamic. There are, for example, shifting patterns of international and regional engagement, while new threats such as the role of warlords and militias and the effects of regional contagion continuously emerge. Africa's wars have their origins in an array of social, resource, personality/leadership, class, ideological, colonial, post-colonial, ethnic, territorial, religious and Cold War strategic divides. At times some, one or even most of these factors underlie the conflicts being waged in various states on the continent. The end result is that, in many cases, the inheritance of an already weak state has been further exacerbated by a vicious cycle of skills shortages, poor management, the abuse of leadership, and war and conflict itself.

The inability to manage these issues without conflict reflects a core problem with the African state: that the state and its leadership are weak and insecure, and the response to challenges is often through patronage and the related

crowding out of private investment, the use of divide-and-rule tactics, and the practice of external aggression.

Poverty frequently exacerbates existing conflicts and can serve as a catalyst for new conflicts in this type of state environment. However, poverty is a symptom of a wider malaise in Africa, where states lack the capacity to extend authority beyond their own borders. The artificial nature of African borders is arguably less of a burden to African states than it is an asset to the continent's leadership who have used the moratorium put in place by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) regarding the discussion of African state boundaries to consolidate their national rule.

Conflict resolution is critical in this environment. It is not desirable to create and maintain new colonies through external intervention, as has been attempted in Sierra Leone. Such frozen societies may be infinitely preferable to state collapse where mayhem rather than new, more stable states could replace the status quo, but they do not address the core problems of state incapacity and remain vulnerable to (largely Western) political whims. It is also important to address conflict situations before they progress to open warfare.

Africa's response to the challenges facing it has emerged in the form of NEPAD. Key in this is the need for African attempts at conflict resolution to succeed so as to create the foundations needed to build a more prosperous future for the continent.

Lessons from conflict resolution

South Africa's own transition to democracy and its experience in African conflict mediation illustrates that the successful resolution of inter-communal problems rests on the need for communities to recognise the rewards of co-operating and, conversely, the costs of not doing so. *Ten ingredients for successful mediation* can be identified from the South African experience and from other experiences on the continent.

First, there has to be a real basis for an internal settlement, where the parties all want peace rather than war, and compromise rather than continued conflict. Thus, peace settlements must not be viewed as a *zero-sum* game. It

is important to find a way in which the major conflicting parties can simultaneously achieve the essential elements of what they want to achieve. If the settlement merely puts off the day of reckoning (as it has done in Angola, for example), then mediation efforts are unlikely to make much progress and it is unlikely that the conditions of any agreement reached will be maintained for a prolonged period of time.

In South Africa, it could be argued that while the African National Congress (ANC) wanted to be in government, it recognised, too, that it needed the existing white governmental and business establishment if it was to make a success of ruling the country. At the same time, the white establishment wanted to preserve its position in South Africa, but needed both the involvement and support of the ANC government in order to prosper and achieve this goal in the long-term.

Solutions that emerge in this way are more likely to result in a relatively peaceful transition, in which the skills necessary for economic transition are retained (as in the case of South Africa) rather than scared off (as occurred in Mozambique and Angola).

Thus, there has to be a link between the population and those negotiating a political settlement or the end to conflict in any given state. Civil society can play an important role in creating this 'middle-ground', providing the wider fabric—or normative values—which can serve to urge leadership towards compromise as well as assisting in the development of democratic institutions and practices. This factor, in turn, raises the relationship between external funding and civil society development.

Second, there has to be a reasonably united international community, which can be used by different external parties to bring pressure to bear on the rival domestic/internal parties to reach a peaceful settlement.

As Thomas Ohlson has argued, power-related factors such as military, diplomatic and economic pressure tend to bring about peace settlements.²

² See Ohlson T, *Power Politics and Peace Policies*. Sweden: Uppsala University, 1998. See also Crocker C, 'The varieties of intervention' in Crocker C & F Osler Hampson, with P Aall (eds), *Managing Global Chaos*. Washington DC: US Institute of Peace,

Apart from South Africa, Mozambique is the only other Southern African state in which a post-Cold War negotiated solution to a conflict situation has (thus far) been successful. In Mozambique, as with the transfer from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe in 1979, the amount of leverage that the external mediators could bring to bear on the domestic combatants was critical. The same could be said of the Namibian side of the Angolan–Namibian accords in 1988, which stuck even if the Angolan part of that deal did not.

By contrast, in the turbulent transition from the rule of President Mobutu Sese Seko in the former Zaire in 1997 it was clear the Washington and Paris had their own (sometimes competing) agendas. It was clear, too, that the leaders of Southern African also disagreed over the measures necessary in Zaire, often for personality reasons and as a result of jealousies rather than because of the substance of their policies.

Third, there is a need for prescient leadership and timing. Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk were crucial figures in South Africa and recognised the need for compromise and the need to seize the moment.

Fourth, the external community has to offer the necessary resources, particularly in the post-conflict peacebuilding phase. The provision of external facilitators or mediators may be important, but this should not obscure the importance of developing local talent in these fields. There is a need to distinguish between the use of prominent personalities as *patrons* of a peace process and the use of *facilitators* to bring about a peaceful settlement. There is also a danger of expecting external agencies to take up the functions of government—whether by design (such as in Sierra Leone) or by default (as was the case in Angola)—through a reliance on humanitarian assistance.

Fifth, there is a need to lay the foundations for the peace agreements to stick, and a need for a process through which the protagonists are able to get to know the opposing side well enough to inculcate a sufficient degree of trust. In South Africa, the period between 1985 and 1990 was crucial in building the personal relationships and understanding necessary to move to the negotiating table in the early 1990s, as it was during this period that the first tentative overtures occurred between Pretoria and the ANC.

1996, pp.183–197.

Sixth, proper analysis is necessary to understand the causes of conflict and the possible means of resolution.

Seventh, processes of building trust and the need for dialogue never end.

Eighth, there is a need to follow the broad guideline of inclusivity rather than exclusivity in devising democratic solutions to conflict situations. There is, however, a need to make a clear distinction between the use of a government of national unity (GNU) as a means to a political end, and a GNU as an end in itself. There are dangers in using this as a way to legitimate fraudulent election processes and fraudulent election outcomes rather than as a conduit for reconciliation.

Ninth, political programmes have to be accompanied by explicit plans and processes in government, including plans and programmes specifically targeting the armed forces through demobilisation and integration processes.

Tenth, elections should be seen as the conclusion of a process of democratisation rather than the start of one. There is a need, however, for a deepening of a 'culture' of democracy, beyond the creation of formal democracies through elections. Until this forms part of the essence of African polities, the potential for political reversal remains, as does the danger of programmes such as NEPAD faltering when elite and local political interests are threatened by the implementation and operation of international norms, standards and conditionalities. The setting and monitoring of such governance standards and the establishment of such a culture has to be a bottom-up, civil society-oriented process, rather than one that is commonly leadership-driven.

Conclusion:

From conflict resolution to good governance?

Conflict resolution efforts in Africa also pose questions about what type of democratic system is most suitable for African nations as they emerge from conditions of conflict and social unrest. In addition, it also raises important issues about the nature of external engagement and the relationship between external engagement and governance. This is most pertinent in the light of NEPAD. Indeed, NEPAD's success hinges on the application and policing of governance provisions by African states in return for increased financial assistance, debt relief and trade access.

While NEPAD is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, there are a number of critical concerns which should be raised in this context:

- First, there is a need to promote convergence in Southern Africa in terms of values of good governance, democratisation, human rights, freedom of expression and press freedom, and a free market as the foundations on which successful states are built, rather than convergence to the lowest continental common denominator. This highlights a core difficulty for NEPAD in relation to the tension between requiring African support for its adoption and adopting a set of elitist values for its success. In spite of the South African government's reluctance to admit as much, Zimbabwe has been a test case for NEPAD in terms of the promotion and policing of these values.
- Second, NEPAD's success will arguably rest less on the promotion of these values by the continent's leadership than it will on the role of public, and especially civil society institutions, in their promulgation.
- Third, in devising the specifics of NEPAD's various technical programmes, there is little capacity outside of South Africa, raising concerns about wider African support for the initiative and implementation capacity, as well as possible problems arising out of tensions between national and transnational priorities.
- Fourth, NEPAD is dependent on a few key leaders, notably Thabo Mbeki, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Olusegun Obasanjo and Abdul Wade. Yet their respective positions are by no means secure in their own states, and each of them have widely different democratic backgrounds. Moreover, there are as yet unresolved tensions between them—such as that relating to

whether or not African permanent Security Council membership at the United Nations should occur—which could derail the process.

- Fifth, and related to the above, there are significant problems of democracy and governance in many of the 15 states which make up the NEPAD Steering Committee, where some are island states with the differences that this brings to bear.

NEPAD Steering Committee	
<i>Region</i>	<i>Countries</i>
North Africa	Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia
West Africa	Nigeria, Senegal, Mali
East Africa	Ethiopia, Mauritius, Rwanda
Central Africa	Cameroon, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe
Southern Africa	Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa

Africa cannot afford any more failed peace processes any more than it can live with collapsed development programmes. Yet the bottom line is thus—as with economic development, the lesson from African conflict resolution is simply that there are no quick fixes.

Appendix: Conference programme

Angola to Zimbabwe: From African Conflict Prevention to Resolution and Governance?

Tuesday 12 March 2002

*University of Pretoria Auditorium, Groenkloof Campus,
Cnr. George Storrar & Leyds Street, Groenkloof, Pretoria*

09h00-09h30: **Registration**

09h30-09h35: **Welcome**

Japanese Ambassador, Yasukuni Enoki

09h35-09h50: **Introduction**

Joe Mollo, BHP-Billiton

Shinsuke Horiuchi, JIIA

Morning Session

09h50-10h20: **Lessons Learnt from Conflict Mediation**

Jan van Eck, CIPS

10h20-10h50: **Sanctions, Conditionalities and Conflict Prevention**

Greg Mills, SAIIA

Political Institutions of Co-existence

Yoichi Mine, Chubu University

10h50-11h15: **Tea/Coffee**

11h15-12h45: **Questions and Answers**

12h45-13h40: **Lunch**

Afternoon Session

- 13h40-14h10: **Conflict Prevention: A Role for Multilateral Institutions?**
Sadaharu Kataoka, JIIA
SG Kudjoe, South African Department of Foreign Affairs
- 14h10-14h40: **Questions and Answers**
- 14h40-16h10: **Case Studies: Good Governance, Democratisation and Conflict Prevention**
Rafael Marques, Open Society, Angola
Kazuyoshi Aoki, JIIA
Hassan el-Talib, Embassy of Sudan
Alfred Nhema, University of Zimbabwe
Alex Frempong, University of Ghana
Andrea Ostheimer, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
- 16h10-16h30: **Summary & Conclusions**



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