

PEACE AND SECURITY

The third session of the Electronic Roundtable, covering peace and security, opened with panel presentations (March 16-20, 2000) and continued with discussion by panelists and participants from March 17 through April 25. This chapter juxtaposes the views of panelists and participants, in their own words.

The full archive, including e-mail contributions by participants and English and French versions of all panel presentations, is available at www.africapolicy.org/rtable.

Panelists

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Cilliers: By the 1990s, the military balance between state and society in Africa had changed profoundly. At independence, one could still argue that the post-colonial regime retained the balance of force through control over the security apparatus and the level of armaments at the unique disposal of the same. At the turn of the century, an increased number of African states have atrophied and weapons, spilling over from armed conflicts throughout the region, circulate virtually uncontrolled. Societies are allowed to arm and challenge the incumbent elite, while the security agencies themselves, in many instances, have decayed and lost their coherence.

As a result, a military victory by any of the various armed forces in a country such as the Democratic Republic of Congo is unlikely to have any impact on levels of social violence, social fragmentation and the nature of the economy. At the same time, state control, to the extent that it exists in the form of organized administration and the provision of services, has contracted inward, in many instances reflecting an exclusively urban bias and neglect of the rural populations.

Today, the surfeit of arms and lack of control over national territories has resulted in much of Sub-Saharan Africa being characterized not by the state's monopoly over

the instruments of coercion, but by a balance of force between the state and the community. The result, in a highly armed and violent continent, ironically, is the creation of a security vacuum. Within Nairobi, Johannesburg or Luanda, security is available to those who can afford it. To Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, war comes to those countries that have exploitable resources worth fighting over. In both instances the vast majority of the poor population are left to fend for themselves and forced to arm and organize to prevent their exploitation by local warlords, ethnically based politicians or criminals.

Wachira: First, I think peace and security must fundamentally be about improving people's quality of life and relationships. For this to happen, Africa needs a proactive pursuit of peace and security that must put in place structures, processes and institutions capable of forestalling the deterioration of tensions and conflicts into armed conflict.

Secondly, I think addressing the roots of conflicts in Africa is really addressing economic development, human rights and democracy and environmental degradation.

Thirdly, the nature of conflict-related emergencies, the multiplicity of their consequences, their persistence long after the conflict is terminated and the absence of tried and tested approaches in dealing with them, make conflicts a central concern in the continent.

Fourthly, (which could very well be the first) my focus is influenced by my work in the field of peace-building and conflict transformation for the last ten years. This work has involved mostly grassroots peace-building and reconciliation work in diverse places in the continent. As a result, my reflections are more from the perspective of a practitioner than academic

Ayissi: The immediate post-Cold War was characterized in Africa by two competing and radically opposed trends: On the one hand, we had a trend of Death and Despair, which was essentially marked by an important inflation of violence all over the continent. For many African people, the post-Cold War great expectations of a bright new era of peace and conviviality blew up at the very moment the rest of the world was celebrating the dislocation of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Iron Curtain.

On the other hand, there was an equally powerful trend of Life and Hope. Boosted by the windows of (peace) opportunities opened by the "new world unburdened by superpower confrontation," the international community in general, and the United Nations in particular, engaged in a major effort to tackle the scourge of mass violence in the continent. In Somalia, Rwanda, and other African "hells on earth," thousands of soldiers of peace were sent and billion of dollars were spent with the objective to "make peace" and "restore hope." Unfortunately, these substantial global endeavors remained relatively powerless. Despite genuine political will and commitment, peace was not rebuilt and hope was not restored.

On the contrary, the African universe of armed violence became “the bonfire of the vanities” of the international community. In Somalia for instance, the nearly “Hollywoodian” show of force by American Marines was sunk in a flood of blood and tears. In Rwanda, despite the presence of UN peacekeepers, Africa gratified the world with one of the last great human tragedies of the century: within a couple of weeks, hundreds of thousands of people were savagely slaughtered on the abominable altar of ethnic hatred. In Angola, experience continues to show that despite an indisputable global security in a world free from the collective threat of a nuclear holocaust, our “global village” is in fact an ambiguous universe of deeply fragmented security.

Sahnoun: An ever-expanding illicit trade in small arms thrives on the backs of Africa’s youth. The mounting death toll, which results from large quantities of small arms in circulation, poses one of the great humanitarian challenges of our time. Yet, the international trade in small arms remains mostly unregulated. Future generations will judge us by our response to the challenge posed.

A whole generation of African children is being inducted into a culture of violence marked by violent death and injury. Of the 7-8 million fatalities in Africa’s recent regional conflicts, 2 million were children. Four to five million children have been disabled, another 12 million left homeless. More than 1 million orphaned or separated from their families. This mental militarization will tear apart the last remnants of civility.

Small arms violence undermines good governance. It disrupts trade, tourism and investment. As domestic conditions deteriorate, violent crime and general lawlessness increase exponentially, a phenomenon which has been termed “la criminalisation de l’etat en Afrique.” It raises the cost of maintaining order, thus jeopardizing economic development by depleting budget resources. As a result, with human rights abuses on an increase and famine conditions exacerbated, democracy and development are put at risk.

Wachira: There is more or less a consensus with regard to the limitations of the traditional narrow military-and-external-threat understanding of peace and security. The “national security” doctrine especially during the cold war era focused on how a nation protects its “core national values” and “interests” against external threat through the use of military force or threat of it. In the developing world, and certainly in Africa, the doctrine was much more that of “state security.”

Here, the focus was not so much the security of the nation and its interests as that of the ruling elite—perceived to be the link that symbolized and held the new and fragile nation-states together. This approach was aided by a ruthless state apparatus, which in turn enjoyed the support of super powers in the cold war arithmetic and was based on the assumption that African countries needed strong centralized rule in order to survive.

Unlucky countries like Angola and Mozambique had the super powers support different elite camps in the countries to wage some of the longest and disastrous civil wars in the continent. Support by super powers encouraged regimes to disregard

internal tension-generating realities that today should be the central concern of peace and security in African countries. These include, but are not limited to, the fragility of the African nation-states and their economies, chronic poverty, marginalization and exclusion from the political process, and inequitable distribution of resources, all of which are at the core of social justice. These tensions are exacerbated when interested parties organize around ethnic (or clan), racial, religious, linguistic and other differences to stake their claims. The result has been violent conflicts in one African country after another. Ironically, the very people that yearn for social justice end up hopelessly divided and at war with each other.

Ayissi: The tragic transformation of most of African armed conflicts into what Jakkie Cilliers and Greg Mills characterize as “complex emergencies” makes peace operations in the continent a very dangerous task. As a consequence, a new policy of downsizing African peace support operations succeeded to the exuberant “euphoria of the post-Cold war era of peacekeeping”. In 1994 for instance—the “golden age” of post-Cold War peace support operations, with more than 80,000 troops from 77 countries scattered all over the world for a budget of 3.4 billions US dollars—70% of deployments were in Africa.

By way of contrast, five years later, in 1998, sixteen UN peace operations were going on in the world. Only four of these were taking place in Africa. This drastic shift is explained by the growing reluctance of Nations contributing troops to “expose their soldiers to unreasonable risks,” as well as the “general unwillingness to become involved in operations costly in blood or resources.” The ghosts of Mogadishu (Somalia), where eighteen American marines were killed in October 1993 and the nightmares of Kigali (Rwanda), where ten Belgian UN peacekeepers were to be executed a couple of months later, continued to haunt an international community increasingly terrified by African tragedies.

This combination of (1) the end of the Cold war, (2) the (global) rising expectations for peace and (3) the (regional) diving of Africa into the abyss of escalating mass violence has never really been understood by the traditional diplomacy of crisis management. This organic incapacity to understand the challenges ahead explains the unfortunate disengagement from Africa. Since the situation could not be understood, there was no reason for peacekeepers to remain engaged in a place transformed into a graveyard for well-established certainties.

Understandably, assistance, support, commitment and engagement for peace in Africa dramatically declined at the very moment they were badly needed. Some of the main actors in the international system strengthened this trend by making declarations that could be taken—and were actually taken—for “paradigms” for a “new theory” of UN peacekeeping operations. This was the case for the U.S. President, Bill Clinton, when, in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in October 1993, he

declared that “the United Nations must learn to say “no” to peacekeeping operations that were not feasible.”

Sahnoun: The accumulation of power in the hands of those with guns has led to the collapse of states across the African continent. A dangerous strategic triad has developed between the trade in diamonds, oil and precious metals that have become a key means of funding illicit arms purchases. Throughout Africa, conflicts are being fueled in an effort by irresponsible and reckless profiteers to control precious natural resources that, rather than being means for economic and political empowerment, end up fueling the engines of war and annihilation.

More and more governments fail in providing for basic human needs. Increasing social iniquities further alienate the disenfranchised and contribute to sudden explosions of violence. Not surprisingly, virtually every low-income country in Africa has either undergone major conflict, or borders on one or more countries in conflict.

The oversupply of inexpensive small arms also heightens inter-state conflict, putting the nation-state system itself under attack. With armed guerilla groups proliferating and often dividing into warring factions, internal instabilities, increasingly, tend to evolve into larger regional wars. The conflict in Congo-Kinshasa involves the armed forces of eight countries.

Cross-border support for insurgent movements is also on the rise. As a result, large-scale wars are ongoing in Angola, Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan. Low intensity conflicts are being waged, inter alia, in Burundi, Chad, Djibouti, Senegal, and Uganda. Of the 25 major conflicts identified world-wide in 1997, all new ones were located in Africa. As a result, of the 22 million refugees globally, 8.1 million are in Africa. Throughout Africa, currently about 20 million people are displaced.

Cilliers: The response of the international community to the challenge of instability in Africa is generally hostage to the state-centered peacekeeping debate. It is to peacekeeping that commentators turn when looking for solutions to violent crises that are very different from those envisaged at the end of Second World War when the UN Charter was drafted.

During the Cold War regional conflicts were at once internationalized and subsumed within the superpower competition and controlled to avoid escalation into nuclear conflict. In the process, the strategic relevance of regions such as Africa was elevated as part of the global chess board—pawns in a much larger game. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the situation is much changed. Africa has lost its strategic relevance. Apart from humanitarian concerns, only selected areas with exploitable natural resources demand the attention of the larger and more powerful countries.

A blurring in the clear demarcation of roles between sub-regional, regional and international organizations—the UN in particular—has occurred after the end of the

Cold War. During the bi-polar era, the division of labor was clear. The UN mounted peacekeeping operations and deployed political missions, while regional organizations concentrated on preventive diplomacy. The proliferation of internal conflicts after the fall of the Berlin Wall have confounded this clear division. Almost as if to mirror this trend, the increase in the number and the nature of the various actors involved in internal conflicts have further complicated the ability of state-centered negotiations and mediation to succeed.

Wachira: Africa's conflicts have exerted such heavy tolls on the people and their cultures, economies, infrastructure and environment, that it is a wonder how some have survived. Everywhere, there are tales of heart-wrenching experiences in situations of conflict. Millions of deaths, displacement of people, psychological scars, starvation, destruction of community bonds, environmental degradation, and the proliferation of weapons—mostly in the hands of non-state actors—are some of the consequences of these conflicts.

More often than not, a conflict in one country triggers off other conflicts or insecurity in a region, thus making it difficult to distinguish between intra- and international conflicts. Regionalization of conflicts happens through movements of refugees, fighters and arms. Political activity among refugees becomes a major source of conflict as evidenced in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, as do ethnic and cultural affinities along borders. These problems are heightened by perceptions of direct or indirect encouragement of political activity by host countries.

In the Great Lakes region, it is clear that one episode of a conflict creates the conditions for the next one. For example, Rwandans exiled in Uganda in the 1950s launched their comeback from Uganda in 1990. After the genocide in 1994, other Rwandans found refuge in eastern DRC. The current involvement of Rwanda in the Democratic Republic of Congo war is excused by Rwanda's need to neutralize politically active Rwandan refugees who might want to stage an armed comeback.

Cilliers: Direct conflict between African states has, in fact, been a relatively isolated phenomenon. Those that have taken place have not involved any substantial commitment of resources for peacekeeping operations. Virtually all African conflicts that have involved some type of peacekeeping effort have been conflicts within states. An important reason for this feature is the permeability of African borders and the weakness of African states themselves.

This does not deny the fact that virtually all of these internal conflicts have had a regional dimension. In many cases neighboring countries have involved themselves in the internal affairs of others or allowed their territory to be used as a springboard for such involvement. In others, countries do not control their own territory and cannot end cross-border actions, particularly when international boundaries cut through, rather than follow, broad ethnic and tribal divides.

Ayissi: In many past conflicts, obviously something needed to be done. But the traditional diplomacy of peacemaking remained voiceless, paralyzed both by the unprecedented scope of violence escalation and its structural impotence. All things being equal, nothing could logically be done. And nearly nothing was done beyond the management of (humanitarian) emergencies.

Certainly with a view to “explaining” this hardly understandable situation, the United Nations repeatedly mentioned the following self-evident truth: there is no peace without a local genuine will for peace:

This was the case for the Security Council when deciding that the time was ripe for leaving Somalia alone with its own evils. On that occasion, the Security Council recognized that “the lack of progress in the Somali peace process [...] in particular the lack of sufficient cooperation from the Somali parties over security issues, has fundamentally undermined the United Nations objectives in Somalia and, in these circumstances, continuation of UNOSOM II beyond March 1995 cannot be justified.”

A couple of months earlier, when the same scenario was being reproduced in Rwanda, in much more dramatic circumstances, the Security Council expressed its “deep regret at the failure of the parties to implement fully the provisions of the Arusha Peace Agreement, particularly those provisions relating to the cease-fire.” Consequently, the Security Council, “shocked [and] appalled at the [...] large-scale violence in Rwanda [...], deeply concerned by continuing fighting, looting, banditry and the breakdown of law and order [authorized] a force level as set out in paragraphs 15 to 18 of the Secretary-General’s report of 20 April 1994 for that purpose.”

In a much more explicit way, the “paragraphs 15-18” option did simply mean the scaling down of UN engagement in Rwanda. In those four paragraphs, the Secretary General recommended, as a possible option (among many), the reduction of UNAMIR from 2545 personnel to “a small group [of blue helmets] headed by the force Commander, with necessary staff.” This “small group” was to “remain in Kigali to act as intermediary between the two parties in an attempt to bring them to an agreement on a cease-fire, this effort being maintained for a period of up to two weeks or longer, should the Council so prefer.”

A couple of years later in Angola, nearly the same scenario would be repeated with the same implacable logic.

Obviously, African warlords had learned very well the lesson on the most efficient way to get UN peacekeepers out of Africa!

Cilliers: Globally, a new security paradigm seems to be emerging. This consists of regions accepting co-responsibility and sharing the burden to police themselves and a dilution of the central role that many had hoped the United Nations would play in this regard. This agenda is primarily, but not exclusively, driven by the United States,

which is seeking co-option and burden sharing by others in the hegemonic role that the demise of the Soviet Union had thrust upon it.

The most recent and arguably the most important indication of this trend is the US drive for NATO to undertake so-called non- Article 5 missions and U.S. support for a greater “European defense identity” as opposed to a transatlantic identity.

It is also becoming apparent that Africa is increasingly intent on engaging and dealing with its own challenges and that the phrase “African solutions to African problems” may yet come to haunt the continent. In this process, the debate within the continent is enthusiastic about the complementary role that sub-regional organizations can play in the maintenance of peace and security in the various sub-regions and the role that the latter can play in peacekeeping

Wachira: Due to the regionalization (and, ultimately, internationalization) of Africa’s conflicts, it is now commonly accepted wisdom that one cannot address conflict issues in just one country and not pay attention to the regional and international dimensions. Thus, solutions to the conflict in the DRC cannot be sought without paying attention to the conflicts in the neighboring countries of Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. The war in Sierra Leone was intimately connected with events in Liberia. Similarly, Kenya’s increased insecurity in the urban areas and apparent arms race among its pastoral communities in the north is best viewed in the context of long periods of war and insecurity in the region, especially conflicts in Somalia and Sudan and the subsequent movement of people and arms into Kenya.

Cilliers: Yet, regional approaches bring little additional capabilities to bear, apart from the burden to co-ordinate and to collaborate. Regional alliances of the willing and able in Africa do not have the practical means to bring security to the continent. As part of regional peacekeeping forces, tentative democracies and de facto one- party states also find it difficult to transfer the values of respect for human rights and impartiality to the armed forces of neighboring countries when they have been unable to inculcate the same within their own borders.

To be fair, the thrust towards the provision of regional stability through indigenous peacekeeping forces in Africa by donor countries does not mean complete abandonment of the continent to its own devices. Although, Africa is barely at the margins of global security concerns.

Sahnoun: Conflicts have several political, economic, and social causes, but it would be much easier to prevent and resolve them if the availability of small arms was curtailed. For the supply of small arms and light weapons is the most important aggravating factor in conflict situations.

Most small arms originate in the industrialized North. The permanent members of the UN Security Council alone account for around 85% of the global arms trade. Forty of the worldwide flow of small arms is attributed to illicit trafficking and the

majority of illicit weapons are proven to originate in the licit trade. Getting these governments to exercise restraint and to tighten national and international controls on small arms exports should lend itself to significant reductions in supply.

Measures must be devised to limit access to small arms, to curtail the supply of small arms and to reduce the demand for small arms. The weapons of violence must be brought back into the control of the state, with the state itself being made accountable for its deeds.

This essentially means empowering the state at one level, and using all tools available to induce more responsible behavior on its part, at another. The two approaches must be mutually compatible.

Wachira: In itself, the proliferation of arms throughout the continent is of important significance to peace and security. As states engage in wars or fight rebels, keeping track of arms (especially those defined as “light” or “small” arms) becomes very difficult as control regimes collapse. Arms that are today in legal (government) hands easily become the illicit ones in tomorrow’s wars, car-jacking and bank robberies. As already mentioned, ordinary herders in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Sudan are armed with sophisticated weapons, ostensibly for the protection of their herds. In reality, these weapons have been a major source of insecurity in the area. They are used in raids and counter raids within and across national borders that the governments in the region might not be able to control save by deploying their combined militaries along the borders. For Kenya, the entire northern belt is a security nightmare.

A number of Africa’s major conflicts have been funded through illegal trade in natural resources. Thus, in the DRC, Sierra Leone and Angola, diamond and gold mines, oil fields and even forests are always a major prize for any side of the conflict. With all its diamonds and oil and relatively small population, Angola ought to be one of the richest countries in Africa. Mineral wealth is often both the reason and the means for some of the long-running conflicts. Fighters on all sides benefit from the mineral wealth while arms merchants are only too happy to keep the fighters supplied for a cut of the mineral wealth. In spite of the UN ban on unofficial diamond sales these still find their way to Western capitals.

Cilliers: Regional peacekeeping capacity building programs will continue. They are domestically less controversial than the provision of direct assistance to the security agencies of African countries, provide high donor visibility at limited cost, and serve to strengthen the myth of African solutions to African problems. Many African governments will continue to accept such assistance using it for their own, as opposed to the intended, purposes as demonstrated by Uganda where its ACRI trained peacekeeping battalion is deployed on offensive missions deep into the territory of neighboring DRC in support of rebel forces.

In their efforts at wrestling with the challenge of helping Africa to become more secure at domestically affordable political and economic costs, the recipes of donor countries are becoming more varied. Limited logistical support and financial assistance will still be forthcoming to assist larger African countries such as Nigeria (and South Africa?) to enforce their own version of stability—often in their own interests and in their own backyard. Such support will be enough to assuage domestic political opinion that outside countries are “doing something” short of committing their own ground forces. Great Britain already provides limited logistic support to ECOMOG in Sierra Leone, while the US funds the same.

Wachira: A worrying trend in Africa that is gaining root is the privatization of security. In its more universal sense, this takes the form of mercenaries who wage wars on behalf of both internal and external actors in African conflicts. Its more localized version is the “hired thugs” who are used by political actors to visit violence on opponents. Urban insecurity has also been in the increase, leaving citizens to devise “self-help” security arrangements as the police can no longer cope. The rise in urban insecurity has been connected to the general deterioration of economies, thus forcing people (mostly gangs of educated but unemployed youth) into violent and daring crime. In Nairobi, for instance, well organized crime syndicates rival and often outdo the police in their sophistication. Indeed, Africa’s unemployed and increasingly restless youth pose a major security concern.

Cilliers: A recent trend is also the increased use of private security companies such as Sandline International or Military Professional Resources Inc. in lieu of British or American combat formations. In the absence of meaningful institutions for the provision of security at the national level, a change in the debate regarding foreign private security companies seems to be emerging. Whereas the debate was obsessed with the historically emotive concept of “mercenaries”, much contemporary writing and thinking is moving away from the often sterile attempts to judge actions as being mercenary or not.

Although perhaps not in the guise of Executive Outcomes, the privatization of security, war, and even peacekeeping in Africa will continue. Part of the reason for this is, of course, that a number of the governing elite are using their armed forces for activities that can best be described as being of a military commercial nature. In this process, the armed forces of a number of countries engage in entrepreneurial, often illegal and exploitative endeavors in neighboring countries. These endeavors are deployed in the interests of the elite to compensate for their poor resources and often merely to survive in a hostile environment.

Building African peacekeeping capacity and the use of private companies cannot and will not be much more than of symbolic value at a time when the fundamental challenge is that of state building. While such endeavors may help African armed forces

to build regional confidence and stability, the need for state-building inevitably means a return to basics and it is here that Africans need to recapture their own destiny in a concrete manner.

Ayissi: All of a sudden, the illusion of collective security as a collectively kept and enjoyed security lost all its power of illusion. The conditions that had made possible the discursive creation of reality did no longer exist. This time small countries with small wars without determinant impact on the legitimate configuration of world power had to face the now unhidden truth: (regardless of its moral weight and human cost) not every armed conflict could constitute what is called in the UN Charter “a threat for international peace and security.” Not every conflict could “endanger the maintenance of international peace and security” (articles 33, 34, 37, etc of the United Nations Charter).

Consequently and beyond the appealing rhetoric of “globalization” and the attractive hypothesis of a the world as a “global village,” we did, in reality, witness a process of deglobalization—or regionalization—of conflict management, with an emphasis on regional security:

Wachira: But it is not all gloom and doom. There are some positive developments in Africa that need to be recognized and encouraged. Continental and regional groupings are increasingly involved in responding to conflict issues within and among their member states. From the OAU to IGAD to ECOWAS to SADC, conflict management and peacemaking have become a central agenda. This is an indication that the continents’ institutions are beginning to rise to the challenge of conflicts. However, it would be interesting if these regional bodies could facilitate processes where more than just the armed parties in the conflict come to the negotiating table. In cases like Sudan, Burundi, DRC and others, attempts should be made to listen keenly to the people on whose behalf the wars are purportedly being fought. This is a move that could enhance the chances of implementation of any agreements. This could be a major innovation to African peacemaking.

At another level, ecumenical organizations such as the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) have also been closely involved in peace-building, working through the faith communities. (The AACC , together with the World Council of Churches, were instrumental in the negotiations and signing of the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement between the government of Sudan and southern rebels). Cutting across all levels, but concentrated mostly at the micro level, are a host of NGOs and other civil society organizations that have sprung up in the continent in the last decade. These are indications that people are willing to claim security as a concern not to be left only in the hands of the state. In any case, the state has often been the main violator of people’s security by either commission or omission.

Sahnoun: Important lessons can be learned from the small arms moratorium of Western African states. As President Alpha Oumar Konare of Mali states: “the

moratorium is not a legal impediment intended to restrict the sovereignty of states, nor reduce their freedom to provide for their own defense. Rather it is an act of faith, demonstrating the irreversible political commitment of our states.”

Small arms proliferation is not merely a regional problem, germane to Africa, but global in dimension. It is, in the words of UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, “one of the key challenges in preventing conflict in the new century.”

In 2001, the United Nations will convene an international conference on illicit small arms trafficking. This past month, the first PrepCom met at UN Headquarters in New York. Unfortunately, precious time is being wasted on modalities. In the interest of saving lives, efforts must be made to define objectives, means and goals for the 2001 conference. A plethora of initiatives notwithstanding concerns persist that political and economic interests of the few may impede humanitarian interests of the many.

Twenty world leaders, including the President of Georgia, the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, the former prime minister of India, and foreign and defense ministers of Brazil, Cameroon, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, have joined President Alpha Oumar Konare of Mali and former prime minister Michel Rocard of France to make a specific contribution to the emerging global small arms effort.

The overall objective of the eminent persons group is to assist in efforts to curtail the proliferation and the unlawful use of small arms. Such an objective will require a constructive parallelism between a whole range of politically and legally binding instruments, involving operative and normative measures pertaining to the illicit as well as the licit trade, which must be dealt with both within the context of conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

Within the context of this overall objective, the group’s goal is to promote a cooperative disarmament approach built around a small arms control regime (SACR), broad in scope and global in reach. The regime would consist of, on the preventive side, (1) an international transparency regime, (2) strengthened national export controls, and (3) an international code of conduct. On the reduction side, to consist of weapons collection programs as integral to peace agreements, demobilization programs, and post-conflict reconstruction. Cooperative disarmament must address security and developmental concerns as functional corollaries and must be integrated into national programs, as well as into international cooperation efforts.

Cilliers: The transformation from essentially predatory and antiquated security agencies to ones that can serve Africa’s needs will not be accomplished simply by superimposing western concepts of “enlightened “ military professionalism or police reform on Africa. Western concepts of military professionalism imply a perennial search for institutional autonomy that contradicts the notion of tight political control. The latter is in many instances essential for regime survival in the developing world.

This is bound to create a high level of tension where foreign training programs are prescribed as a key component of African security sector reform. Given the status quo, the major challenge in the proper regulation of Africa's security agencies lies first and foremost in appropriate role definition about what these structures are for, as opposed to what we were told they were against during the colonial era.

Wachira: Africa's leadership must bear responsibility for peace and security or its absence. There has been a tendency (mostly Western media-driven) to assess the performance of Africa's leaders in terms of how they compare to their predecessors or neighbors. From this perspective, President Moi of Kenya is judged at how well he has kept his country strife-free as compared to neighboring Sudan or Somalia, while President Museveni of Uganda is judged by how well he has kept Uganda together as compared to regimes before his. Not too long ago, the leaders of Rwanda, Uganda, Eritrea and Ethiopia were hailed as a new-breed and visionary, a harbinger of better things to come from Africa. Several years later, there is no immediate evidence of any innovation on their part that could provide long-term solutions to the problems of the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions. On the contrary, the regions' stability seems to have deteriorated and become more militarized. More objective criteria need to be encouraged. For example, how well do leaders nurture institutions that ensure stability, social justice and national cohesion in the long term. Peace and security would better be served if African countries spent less on armament and war preparedness and more on socio-economic development.

Sahnoun: Integral to cooperative disarmament, preventive measures must pursue two objectives: first, to limit and control availability and access to small arms (supply side) and secondly, to reduce the demand for such weapons (demand side). On the supply side such an approach necessitates measures aimed at controlling legal transfers between states, controlling the availability, use and storage of small arms within states, preventing and combating illicit transfers, collecting and removing surplus arms from both civil society and regions of conflict, increasing transparency and accountability, and support for research and information sharing. (enhanced accountability, transparency and improved market regulation). Correspondingly on the demand side, important factors include, the commitment of the international community to reversing cultures of violence, reforming and enhancing the security sector in those states most severely affected, creating norms of non-possession, enhancing demobilization and reintegration programs, halting the use of child combatants, combating impunity, tackling poverty and underdevelopment.

Also, reduction measures must be devised to secure, destroy or otherwise responsibly dispose of small arms that are already in circulation, inside or outside of legal possession. The international donor community should establish collection and buy-back programs, as well as other mechanisms to identify and promote best practices

and to ensure adequate financial support. The Organization of African Unity should be supported in its appeal to the international community “to render to affected African countries all necessary assistance to enable them to implement programs to deal effectively with the problems associated with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.” There are important lessons to be learned from the reintegration of ex-combatants into productive civilian life (Cambodia, Philippines), post-conflict reconstruction (Cambodia, Bougainville) and the reform of police, judicial and penal systems (Cambodia, Papua New Guinea).

What the victims of gun violence need urgently today is the immediate “reduction” of such weapons in the most affected regions of the world, and whatever assistance the UN or the donor countries can come up with in this regard.

Cilliers: There is a need to redefine security in terms that are relevant to Africa—as opposed to the cold war requirements of the former two superpowers or those of the former colonial countries and to design and manage accordingly.

Ideally such an approach should be rooted squarely within that of human security—an approach that refers to the safety and wellbeing of people, individuals and communities rather than that of government alone. Without it, territorial integrity and state security become hollow shells. As the necessary complement to state security, human security brings people-centered considerations into the core of the elements that constitute a peaceful and stable society. And while there is a growing number of definitions of human security and debates over its conceptual grounding, its people-centered focus remains its most powerful attribute. At the inter-state level the central strategic problem in Africa is not deterrence, as in the Cold War, but reassurance. Unlike deterrence, which relies on strategic interaction between opposing states, the key to reassurance is reliable normative and institutional structures.

The appropriate framework for weak countries is that of a comprehensive approach to regional security and stability that emphasizes transparency, confidence building mechanisms and co-operative engagement of its neighbors and that builds on an approach that provides domestic security first. The challenge is therefore not that of collective defense, but collaborative security. It is to this endeavor that regional capacity building efforts should turn.

Wachira: Reconstruction after conflict is often understood in the limited sense of rehabilitating physical amenities and infrastructure destroyed in the conflict. Indeed, this is very important as destruction of infrastructure and other strategic installations forms a central part of any war campaign. But reconstruction after conflict should be approached differently than if one were dealing with consequences of a natural disaster, paying equal attention to the human dimension of our conflicts (or reconciliation if you will.) While natural disasters can bring even sworn enemies together, united in grief and compassion, conflicts tear people apart and destroy bonds, leaving deep psychological scars.

Most of Africa's conflicts have been marked by very high civilian death tolls and some of the vilest atrocities imaginable. From Liberia to Mozambique, Sudan to Angola, Rwanda to Somalia to Sierra Leone, the conflicts leave indelible marks in the collective memories of the people. In some countries, generations of young people have grown up knowing only war. In Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Sudan children have been both direct targets of violence as well as participants in it. Many have watched as their parents, friends and relatives were killed and dismembered, or participated in these acts. There are thousands of women traumatized by wars. We therefore have war-scarred generations across the continent who must somehow fit in the reconstruction equation lest their experiences become the breeding ground for future atrocities.

With the exception of cases like South Africa, the important work of healing of memories and closure after protracted conflicts has been seen as incidental to the building of a sound, developing country and rarely features in peace agreements intended to end the conflicts. In many instances, healing work has been left to non-official actors such as churches and NGOs, whose relationship to the state is often one of mutual suspicion than one of partnership. Some of these actors are well intentioned and doing remarkable work, while others are simply opportunistic. We suggest that rebuilding of human relationships after conflict must be a central and deliberate process recognized as such by authorities. In this regard, South Africa's TRC must be looked to as an example of an attempt to bring closure to an atrocious past so as to create the possibility for a prosperous common future. Neither the offering of blanket amnesty (as in the recent case of Sierra Leone), nor the pursuit of a strictly judicial process (as in the case of Rwanda) may guarantee the kind of peaceable future that is desired.

Rwanda is a very sensitive case and one risks being branded insensitive for suggesting certain things. There is no doubt that, emerging as it is from the atrocious war of 1994, a process of accountability for the deaths is needed. Rwanda also needs to be assured of its security from possible attacks from the remnants of the former army. However, these are only short-term measures. The long-term solution for Rwanda's security lies in its leadership's courage to face up to the healing of the age-old conflict between its two main ethnic groups and working for meaningful co-existence between them. History places an onerous task upon the current leadership. Reconciliation constantly demands more of the "victim" than of the "perpetrator"; more so if, ironically as in the case of Rwanda, the victim is also the victor.

Knowing the sheer number of people killed in the Rwandan genocide and the atrocities involved in this and the Sierra Leone war, who dares to tell the victims to reconcile? And yet, who dares to tell them there is any other way forward? Repeatedly in Africa's conflicts, there are no victims and perpetrators, only victims. Especially

where the violence seeps downwards and infects not a few hundred people but entire communities, then we have to sharpen our tools for finding solutions. To refuse to face up to these questions is to condemn our countries to endless cycles of pogroms. South Africa, though not necessarily perfect and of a different history, is one example where the victim turned victor has shown tremendous magnanimity toward the former aggressor as a way of fostering national reconciliation, even in the absence of any significant reciprocation from the latter. We have to start somewhere to break the cycles of violence that are stifling our countries.

Participants

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Meintjes: There is a temptation to take each presentation in turn, and respond to specific hypotheses and arguments. But I would like to respond to the issue of peace and security in general, and during the course of my discussion, some of the more specific points of agreement or disagreement raised in individual presentations will be covered.

As all the presentations suggested, Africa is a war-torn continent, and in some cases, as in Sudan and Angola, war is of a very long duration. Whilst in general terms, the issue of material interests was raised in the perpetuation of these wars, I think that participants in this discussion have drawn attention to why the wars haven't been stopped by outside intervention. There is a general focus on the international dimensions of peace diplomacy—including US-Africa relations, and the growing emphasis on the part of the Big Three of the notion that Africa should resolve its own conflicts and monitor its own peace-keeping. This begs questions of why, during the 1990s, conflict in the Balkans and in the Gulf could not be countenanced without the intervention and invasion of US forces, whereas in Africa, wars have been allowed to continue for decades?

Different explanations abound for the proliferation and long duration of wars in Africa. These include the fact that Africa holds neither material nor strategic interest for either the US or the other hegemonic powers of the UN (Cilliers). Another explanation was that these same powers are unable to contain the violence in war-zones and are unable to find diplomatic mechanisms to bring warring factions together (Ayissi). Sahnoun suggests that the illicit trade in small arms perpetuates a culture of violence that militates against “civility”. Wachira points also to the resourcing of warring agencies from the proceeds of illegal trade and urges us to address the regional and international dimensions of conflict. A general trend is that internationally there is little understanding of, or even a desire to understand the politics of the conflicts in Africa.

Aid and peace missions sent to try and alleviate want and to cobble peace agreements, failed miserably, as in Mogadishu in 1993 and in Rwanda in 1995. As Anatole Ayissi shows, peace missions to Africa from the North nose-dived, “paralyzed both by the unprecedented scope of violence escalation and its structural impotence” (here “its” refers to the diplomacy of peacemaking). Perhaps of greater significance in explaining the reluctance of the North to intervene, is the fact that after the end of the Cold War, Africa lost its value. It was no longer a potential bastion or a weak link in the fight against communist infiltration—and hence an arena of interest in terms of maintaining the international balance of power, peace and security.

The continent could be relegated to the backwaters of the global mainstream. The conclusion is that whether the US or the UN really understand the causes for the proliferation of wars and civil wars in Africa matters not a jot. They don’t want to become embroiled anyway, and as Ayissi suggests, the North in general remains baffled by conflicts in Africa. But they can now legitimately refrain from intervening based on the argument that because warring parties don’t want peace, there can be no role for peace-keeping “blue helmets”.

A further aspect to draw into our understanding is suggested by Cilliers, that the notion of and responsibility for regional “collective security”, implicitly defined as different from global “collective security”, is something that has been turned over to regional powers. The effect? A flurry of diplomatic intercession by regional powers in Africa, especially South Africa, and of peace-keeping capacity building in different regions since the 1990s.

Whilst the non-African international dimensions are clearly important in understanding the perpetuation of wars in Africa, I do not think that enough weight has been given in any of the discussions to the local and specific aspects of conflict. These need to take account of the political dimensions of the wars, the nature of the warring factions, their political, economic and other objectives. Wars are not irrational affairs. They involve conflicts that cannot be resolved politically. This does not mean that all acts during war are rational. They are often terrifyingly barbaric. But one still needs to understand both the behavior of participants in the conflict and the effects of that behavior. We need to understand the nature of particular conflicts, which groups in society are active agents (as soldiers or guerillas and as civilians), which groups are victims, and what their experience of the violence has been.

Much has been written of the terrible acts of torture and gross human rights violations perpetrated against ordinary people in conditions of war and civil war. These have to be part of what peace missions seek to discover, so that they can begin to interact with local communities in meaningful ways. Peace missions also need to be conceived of in less militaristic ways. Instead, they should take account of the particular experiences and needs of military personnel and civilians in host countries. Gender in

particular has to be a factor that peace missions begin to integrate into their training of both civilians and military personnel involved in the process.

For example, we need to consider the problems of demobilization not simply in terms of integrating soldiers (women and men) into civilian society once more. The issue is very complex, because often the reintegration occurs in the context of significant changes in gender roles in the family. Women largely take over responsibility for the survival of the family. Often, too, women and children have themselves experienced the most terrible forms of violence and depredation, such as rape, abduction, and deprivation. Returning soldiers often feel redundant and angry, compounding the difficulties of trying to cope with their own war experiences. In this context, the post-war experience of women has very often been one of renewed assault against their sexuality. Moreover, peace-keeping forces often behave much like invading armies, and soldiers do not resist taking advantage of women.

If peace efforts are to make any headway, whether they are by regional peace brokers or by outsiders, then the political and social problems of the aftermath of war in particular areas and the needs of reconstruction have to be clearly understood. Generalizations simply will not do. Peace missions have to be careful not to be an excuse for semi-colonial foreign occupation. Thus the political implications have to be clearly understood by all involved, military and civilian personnel alike.

Prah: The contributions for the discussion on peace and security that we have seen so far have been most interesting on two counts. Firstly, there appears to be certain shared concerns about what are perceived to be the principle root causes for conflict in Africa. Secondly, there is also in a number of cases pin-pointed suggestions as to how these sources of conflict could be controlled or stemmed.

George Wachira put his finger on one of the basic issues that in my view creates the conditions for conflict-proneness in Africa— that is, the general economic stagnation and retrogression on the African continent. What is suggested is the fact that the post-colonial state in Africa has invariably become an arena of contestation between rival factions of the elite in African countries for resources and material rewards in the face of diminishing collective social resources. The mobilization of ethnic solidarity in my view is not a reflection of an ingrained tendency for the elite to ideologically degenerate into ethnic reference points. Rather, it is perceived to be, through experience, an easy and readily available reference point for the mobilization of tradition-bound, localized groups who serve as constituencies for the elite. It is arguable that members of the African elite are, themselves, not so easily carried away by ethnic considerations in their everyday lives. But, they find these solidarities to be an easy way of mobilizing support contesting the disposition of resources within the state.

What makes it easy for ethnic solidarity to be so easily mobilized is the fact that these passions have not been provided structures for democratic expression both

within the state and across state borders. We do well to remember that in no instance in Africa do the state borders represent nationalities or ethnicity. African ethno-cultural groupings have in all instances been partitioned by the borders inherited from colonialism. The historical and cultural affinities between groups, which from time immemorial, before the colonial encounter, have shared social, political, economic and cultural space have been suppressed. One of the surest ways of neutralizing ethnic solidarity as a source of conflict in Africa would be the creation of cross-border institutions that, while recognizing the realities of the post-colonial state, create novel linkages which transcend these borders on the basis of democratic principles. I mean Pan-African institutions.

A number of the contributors like Jakkie Cilliers and George Wachira make reference to the emergence of private armies, or as Wachira calls them “hired thugs” across the continent. This phenomenon feeds directly into the expansion of warlordism on the continent. For as long as the infiltration and rampant sale of arms across the continent continues unchecked it is difficult to see how warlordism can be controlled. Complicating this further is the fact that in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Angola, Somalia and the Congo, both the acknowledged state authorities and warlords have become holders of enclaves from which the mineral wealth of the countries are extracted and used for fuelling wars. In some cases the state authorities themselves have become distributors of enclaves to their generals. In a curious way, this represents a replication of the African scenario on the eve of the colonial period.

A number of the contributors suggest the invocation of regional approaches to the search for peace on the continent. My view is that collective efforts transcending individual state borders are certainly crucial to the creation of durable peace on this continent. But, up and above such purely technical considerations, we need to recognize that economic well-being and prosperity, and respect for democracy and human rights are the fundamental conditions which promote peace. Peace cannot be maintained in a durable way through the establishment of state terror and militarism or simply through the imposition of internationally sponsored so-called armed peace forces. More is needed than this. Conditions of social justice, democracy and above all, economic prosperity are crucial for the creation of a peaceful society.

It is noticeable that in those African states where economic prosperity blooms, like Gabon or Botswana—even when conditions of corruption and graft may exist—peace is maintained. This is not to suggest that state authorities who ensure the maintenance of economic prosperity should be excused from transparency and social accountability. I want only to underscore the fact that without economic prosperity and social justice there cannot be peace in Africa. It is for this latter reason that I find Anatole Ayisi’s point that “the United Nations repeatedly mentioned this self-evident

truth: there is no peace without a local genuine will for peace” inadequate. Certainly without a will for peace there can be no peace. But more importantly, the conditions for peace need to exist; otherwise, there will be no will for peace. I do not think Africans are inherently more peace-loving or less peace-loving than any other group in the human community. The point is that people resort to unpeaceful processes when peaceful solutions and conditions elude them.

Purely technical approaches like measures to curtail the supply of small arms and the reduction of “the demand for small arms” and the suggestion that “the weapons of violence must be brought back into the control of the state, with the state itself being made accountable for its deeds”, as suggested by Mohamed Sahnoun, do not seem to me to be approaches that deal with the problem of conflict in Africa at the roots of conflict. They seem to me to deal more with surface phenomena and not root causes. Sahnoun suggests further that “this essentially means empowering the state at one level and using all tools available to induce more responsible behaviour on its part, at another”. This argument presumes that, fundamentally, it is the post-colonial state that has to be defended, as it is, at all costs. It treats the state like “a holy cow” that must be defended at all costs, even when the post-colonial state has failed miserably as an instrument for the protection of democratic practice, the development of post-colonial economies, the respect for human rights and the cultivation of the cultures of the masses as instruments of popular empowerment.

What is holy is democracy, the quality of life, and the human rights of individuals and collectives on the continent. Whether the advancement of these holy objectives are achieved under one flag or fifty flags is in my view irrelevant. Furthermore, where the post-colonial state in Africa has been a miserable instrument for the achievement of these holy objectives, it is our duty to find solutions through the creation of wider structures that go beyond the state. In other words, the answers seem to lie through the creation of Pan-African institutions, collectively controlled and operated by Africans.

With two-thirds of Africa interlocked in war, we may, indeed, be seeing the process of what I call “the decomposition of the post-colonial state”. The higher ideals that must guide us are democracy, respect for human rights, social justice and economic prosperity for the masses of Africa. These are the conditions that will promote the achievement of peace on our continent.