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Author(s)	Hawkins, Virgil
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Orphan Conflicts: Africa and the UN Security Council

Virgil HAWKINS*

Abstract

Although Africa is host to the vast majority - and the most deadly - of conflicts in the world, there is a distinct lack of interest in African affairs shown by governments, the media and academics alike. Such marginalization has also manifested itself in the Security Council. This paper will follow the Security Council's willingness (or lack thereof) to involve itself in Africa's conflicts in the post-Cold War era, and will attempt to draw some conclusions on the future of Council involvement in these conflicts.

Keywords : orphan conflicts, Africa, UN Security Council, intervention, peacekeeping

* Ph. D. Candidate, Osaka School of International Public Policy, Osaka University.

1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign interest in African affairs in general (although never great) declined with the end of the Cold War, and today Africa remains largely marginalized. Such lack of interest is manifested in states' foreign policies, the media and the academic community. This is despite the fact that Africa is home to a disproportionately-high amount of conflict and related, humanitarian crises. In the 1990s, the war dead in Africa accounted for as much as 89 percent of all conflict-related deaths in the world.¹⁾ The response of the UN Security Council to such conflicts has tended to reflect the level of interest of its member states. It has been claimed that 70 percent of Council work is related to African affairs,²⁾ and while this may be true, in the 1990s fewer than 30 percent of resolutions adopted by the Council were Africa-related. The reality is that the majority of conflicts in Africa, some of the worst in the world, have been orphaned by the Security Council and the international community.

This paper will first attempt to demonstrate how conflict (and the nature of conflict) in Africa has changed following the end of the Cold War, and compare the level of conflict in Africa with that of the rest of the world. It will then examine how the UN Security Council has (or has not) dealt with conflict in Africa over the same period. Finally, it will attempt to draw some conclusions, and assess how Council responses towards conflict in Africa may (or may not) evolve in the near future.

2. CONFLICT IN AFRICA

2.1 The End of the Cold War

The military and ideological competition between the East and the West was a dominating factor in warfare throughout Africa during the Cold War years. In a sense, the term 'Cold War' is misleading, in that although there was little direct military confrontation between the US and Soviet Union, numerous 'hot' proxy wars were being fought and fuelled by the superpowers in battles for influence and access to resources.

1) See Figure 1.

2) Interview with non-permanent member of the Security Council, New York, August 1998.

The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, however, saw a sharp decline in both the interest and military investment in such proxy wars. In the case of the disintegrating Soviet Union, supporting parties to conflicts with military hardware was no longer economically feasible.

The end of the Cold War and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union influenced conflict in Africa in a number of ways. Firstly, the conclusion of a number of conflicts that had been artificially supported and perpetuated by the East-West military competition became possible as military support for the parties evaporated. Secondly, parties who maintained the will to continue fighting were forced to find the means to do so elsewhere as their traditional patrons lost interest. In Africa, the illicit trade in diamonds and other minerals became an attractive means of funding armed conflict. Finally, the decline in foreign investment also resulted in the weakening of the state as an institution, contributing to conflict and the creation of failed states.

2.2 The Nature of Conflict

One defining characteristic of modern warfare is a disproportionately high ratio of civilian casualties, with civilians now comprising up to 90 or even 95 percent of conflict-related deaths.³⁾ This increase almost to the point that military casualties appear negligible, is not, however, the result of the use of increasingly destructive weapons. It is rather a result of changes in the nature of warfare, and ironically, the weapons doing the damage are primarily small arms, or even machetes, clubs and knives. The vast majority of conflicts in Africa are not fought between professional, disciplined armies on a battlefield with support from civilians on the home front. The distinction between civilian and soldier, between battlefield and home front, and even between war and peace has become blurred almost beyond recognition. According to James F. Dunnigan, such conflicts do not even deserve to be classified as war, and they are simply dismissed as "large-scale disorder, banditry, or worse."⁴⁾

In the 1990s, a large majority of conflicts were ethnic- or identity-based, intrastate insurgencies and struggles for secession fought less by the military than by para-

3) See Kumar Rupesinghe, *Civil Wars, Civil Peace: An Introduction to Conflict Resolution*, London: Pluto Press, 1998, p. 2; also Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report* 1997, www.ccpdc.org/pubs/rept97.

4) James F. Dunnigan, *How to Make War* (Third Edition), New York: William Morrow and Company, 1993, p. 585.

militaries, militias, guerrillas and civilians. While in the past, civilian casualties and mass population displacements were largely by-products of conflict, in many cases today they are closely linked to the primary purpose of conflict. In an ethnic-based conflict the forcible removal of a rival ethnic group, so-called 'ethnic cleansing', is often the final objective. In both insurgencies and counter-insurgencies, the displacement of the civilian population is used to eliminate support for the enemy and to gain access to resources. In extreme cases, starvation is used as a weapon of war. Such a scorched-earth campaign is being employed in the Sudan in a bid to secure and develop oil fields in rebel-dominated areas.⁵⁾ In Angola, civil war is thought to have resulted in the abandonment of 80 percent of agricultural land.⁶⁾

Changes in weaponry used in conflict have also taken place since the end of the Cold War. Military competition in the developing world by the superpowers during the Cold War saw governments and guerrillas being equipped with tanks, helicopters, jet fighters and other forms of heavy weaponry. The evaporation of such support and improvements in military technology have left nations and arms manufacturers "eager to empty warehouses and arsenals" of superfluous weaponry.⁷⁾ The result has been the proliferation in the developing world of cheap light weapons that are easy to use and maintain. In parts of Africa, an AK-47 can be purchased for as little as 6 US dollars, and land mines for as little as 3 dollars.

The so-called 'revolution in military affairs' (RMA) has little meaning in the vast majority of the world's conflicts, and while the use of guided missiles and other forms of high-tech weaponry have made a considerable impact in the media, they are by no means representative of the way wars are being fought in Africa. Small arms and weapons even more primitive, such as machetes and clubs, are by far the weapon of choice in most conflicts, and have proven themselves to be brutally effective in eliminating the enemy, nowhere more clearly than in the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

The nature of conflict in Africa is closely related to a country's level of development as a state, especially its ability to govern. This is particularly the case in the developing world. The arbitrary drawing of borders, the exploitation of resources throughout and beyond colonisation, and the instigation and perpetuation of conflict by the superpowers

5) See Julie Flint, 'British Firms Fan Flames of War', *The Observer*, 11 March, 2001.

6) Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report 1997*.

7) U. S. State Department Report, *Arms and Conflict in Africa*, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Bureau of Public Affairs, July 1999, www.state.gov/www/regions/africa/9907_africa_conflict.

in the Cold War served to create weak, unstable states. In such states the loyalty of the people tended to remain with their respective clan, tribe or ethnic group, rather than being bestowed upon the state. In most cases, the government lacked the ability or legitimacy to assert its control over the state.⁸⁾

This situation became exacerbated as the superpowers lost interest in the developing world, resulting in dwindling investment. Governments that had been propped up by their patron superpower were left to fend for themselves, and their ability to control their territory diminished even further. Poverty became even more pronounced, and states spiralled into various stages of collapse. The state lost its monopoly on the use of force, giving rise to challenges by opposition groups and secession groups. At a local level, warlords, who are able to profit and prosper in such a chaotic environment, emerged to fill the power vacuum left by the weakened state, and their presence became a defining feature of conflict in the post-Cold War world. John Mackinlay likened the rise in warlordism in the 1990s to that in China following the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911.⁹⁾ Warlords are able to act with virtual impunity, preying upon the weak and exerting control over their territory for personal profit and power without moving to seize power at a national level. In the rare instances where the international community has become involved, warlords have shown the ability to adapt remarkably well to foreign intervention, avoiding direct conflict with foreign forces or observers, and utilising emergency relief aid to their advantage. As Mackinlay notes, "Not only were they extremely adept at seizing the cargoes that were useful, but in many cases they did it in a way that encouraged the flow of relief to continue."¹⁰⁾ As such warlords profit from the continuation of war, their resistance to peace can make the achievement and maintenance of a settlement extremely difficult.

2.3 Putting Conflict into Perspective: Africa and the World at War

When analysing trends in armed conflict in the world, the majority of studies have a tendency to focus on the number of conflicts both in total and by region.¹¹⁾ By making

8) See Donald M. Snow, *Distant Thunder: Patterns of Conflict in the Developing World* (Second Edition), Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1997, pp. 25-33.

9) John Mackinlay, 'Defining Warlords', in *Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution*, Woodhouse and Ramsbotham ed., London: Frank Cass, 2000, p. 50.

10) Ibid., p. 56.

11) See, for example the *SIPRI Yearbook 2000: Armaments, Disarmament, and International Security*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 15-18; Project Ploughshares, *Armed Conflict Report*, www.ploughshares.ca/content/ACR; and the National Defense Council Foundation, *World Conflict List 2000*, www.ndcf.org/Conflict_

comparisons and drawing conclusions based solely on the number of conflicts, these studies fail to distinguish between large-scale wars and small-scale insurgencies, and are hence unable to recognise trends in the magnitude of conflict.¹²⁾ Such comparisons are not convincing as a means of determining whether or not the level of conflict has increased or decreased either in the world in general or in a particular region. When attempting to analyse the magnitude of conflict, the main factors that need to be taken into consideration are the death toll, the number of refugees and internally-displaced persons (IDPs), the level of humanitarian emergency, and the spread of the conflict. Among these factors, the death toll is probably the most representative of the scale of a particular conflict, and even a simple analysis suffices to reveal a number of trends.

Measuring the death toll of a conflict is no simple task, and as Dan Smith points out, data on war deaths are “supremely unreliable”.¹³⁾ More often than not, statistics on death tolls are the product of propaganda campaigns by the warring parties. Apart from propaganda-related distortions, measuring conflict-related fatalities is often difficult simply because nobody is counting. Another problem encountered is determining the extent to which conflict-related fatalities should be included in the death toll. The International Rescue Committee makes a convincing case for a broad definition of conflict-related fatalities in its study on mortality in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by demonstrating the link between war and social function. The study found that the “places and times where infectious disease deaths were highest were the same as where violent death rates were highest”.¹⁴⁾ The use of starvation as a weapon in war zones such as the Sudan and Somalia further supports the inseparability of conflict-related violent and non-violent deaths. Attempts to separate the two “would display a profound ignorance of war and social function”.¹⁵⁾

Figure 1 makes apparent a glaring trend in conflict, which has been either under-represented, or ignored, in academic studies and the media. Almost 90 percent of war dead in the 1990s occurred in Africa, with the total numbers of dead in African conflicts

List/Conflict_Count. 2000.

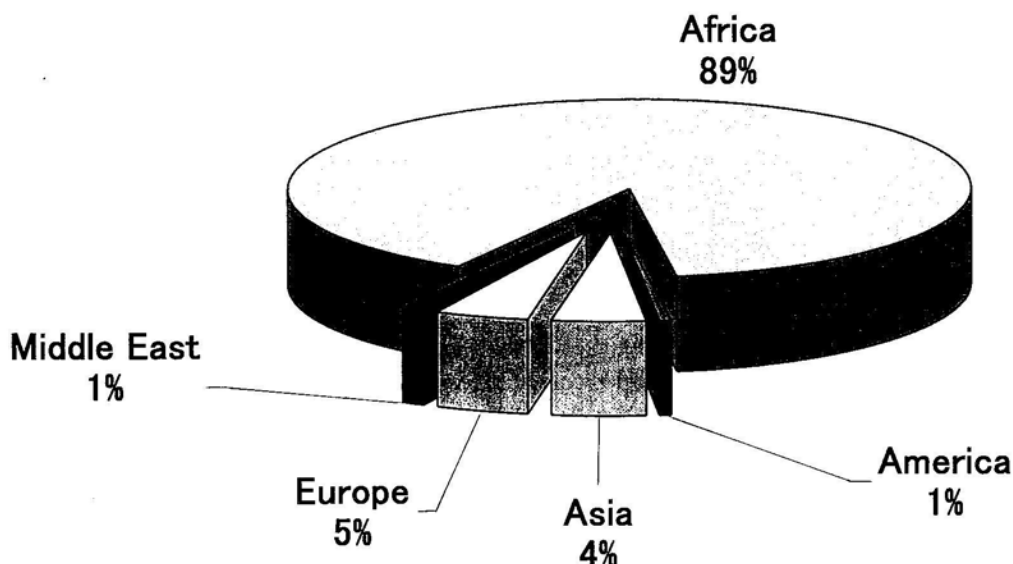
12) SIPRI does include statistics on war dead, but its definition excludes non-violent deaths. Project Ploughshares also provides statistics on war dead, but, like SIPRI, does not attempt to analyse trends in the number of war dead by region or any other criteria.

13) Dan Smith, *The State of War and Peace Atlas* (Third Edition), London: Penguin, 1997, p. 100.

14) International Rescue Committee, *Mortality in Eastern DRC: Results from Five Mortality Surveys*, May 2000, www.theirc.org. The survey estimated that between August 1998 and May 2000 there were more than 1.7 million conflict-related deaths, 200,000 of which could be attributed to acts of violence.

15) Ibid.

Figure 1 WAR DEAD IN THE 1990s (BY REGION)



estimated at 5,226,000.¹⁶⁾ The claim that the Middle East is the most conflict-prone region in the world appears rather misleading when we consider that it accounts for but 1 percent of the world's war dead, with an estimated 60,000 fatalities. If one were to award the distinction of being the most conflict-prone region based on the level of conflict (in terms of deaths), the Great Lakes Region of Africa would undoubtedly be the recipient. Wars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)- and under its former name of Zaire, as well as in Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, caused an estimated 2,580,000 deaths in the 1990s, which amounts to 44 percent of the world total.

3. AFRICA AND THE SECURITY COUNCIL IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

This section will examine how the Security Council has (or hasn't) involved itself in

16) Figure 1 shows the percentage of conflict-related deaths that occurred in the 1990s by region, and includes the dead from conflicts in which there were more than 1,000 conflict-related deaths. Sources consulted include studies by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI); the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS); Project Ploughshares; the Interdisciplinary Research Programme on Root Causes of Human Rights Violations (PIOOM); the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO); the International Rescue Committee (IRC); Humanitarian Law Project/ International Educational Development and Parliamentary Human Rights Group (UK); as well as the news media- including international press agency reports, and other miscellaneous sources. The total number of war dead in the 1990s is estimated at 5,840,000.

solving African conflicts in the post-Cold War era, following Council action through four phases. The first phase saw the Council, taking advantage of post-Cold War euphoria, actively attempting to bring an end to conflicts that had been instigated or perpetuated during the Cold War. In the second phase the Council began to wind down its involvement in Africa after over-ambitious peace operations in Somalia began to falter. An almost complete refusal to involve itself in Africa marked the third phase, as conflicts in Rwanda and Zaire (DRC) raged virtually unchecked. In the fourth phase (from the late 1990s to the present), the Council has made some cautious attempts to re-engage in some conflicts in Africa. Regardless of the changing trends in the Council, some conflicts that have continued throughout the post-Cold War period, such as those in Algeria, the Sudan and Uganda, have been, and remain, completely orphaned.

3.1 Signs of Life: Namibia, Angola and Mozambique

Crippled by the superpowers' open use of the veto during the Cold War, the UN Security Council was unable to intervene in conflicts, not only in Africa, but also throughout the rest of the world. As the Cold War drew to a close, the Council began to emerge from its hibernation, and found itself able to come to agreement and cooperate on a number of issues. The Council passed only 2 resolutions on Africa in 1990,¹⁷⁾ but by 1993 was consistently adopting over 20 resolutions per year on African matters.¹⁸⁾ At the same time, peaceful solutions were explored and pursued for conflicts that had been fuelled and perpetuated by the Cold War. In Africa this applied to peace efforts in Namibia, Angola and Mozambique.

The end of the Cold War provided an opportunity for a solution to be found to the situation in southwestern Africa, where Cuban forces supporting the government in Angola were opposed by US-backed rebels and South African troops occupying Namibia. In 1988 the US brokered a deal linking the withdrawal of South African forces from Namibia in exchange for the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola. This agreement paved the way for Security Council involvement in both Namibia and Angola. In Namibia, the Security Council established the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG) to supervise and control elections, facilitating the early independence

17) One resolution approved the membership of Namibia into the United Nations (Resolution 652 (1990)), and the other approved the Secretary-General's settlement plan for Western Sahara (Resolution 658 (1990)).

18) One exception was in 1997, in which the Council adopted only 16 resolutions on African issues.

of Namibia. With the full withdrawal of South African troops and the stationing of approximately 8,000 UN personnel, the elections were a success, and the transition to independence was smooth.¹⁹⁾

The Security Council also made several attempts to bring peace to Angola throughout the 1990s. The United Nations Angolan Verification Mission (UNAVEM) supervised the withdrawal of Cuban forces from 1988 to 1991. The removal of the Cuban and South African military forces was insufficient to maintain peace, however, and civil war continued between the government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).²⁰⁾ When a peace agreement was reached in 1991,²¹⁾ the Council established UNAVEM II to assist in the implementation of the peace. Inadequate resources for the mission and a lack of international support for the peace process in general saw the failure of closely-contested elections and the resumption of large-scale civil war.²²⁾

In Mozambique, the withdrawal of support for rebels by Rhodesia, and later by South Africa, and general fatigue of the warring parties contributed to the gradual conclusion of hostilities and the signing of a General Peace Agreement in October 1992. The United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) oversaw elections and to some extent the implementation of the peace agreement. Although the deployment of ONUMOZ was slow and its capacity to implement peace was rather limited, skilful diplomacy (by the UN Special Representative Aldo Ajello and by the US) and the relative weakness of the rebels in comparison to the government ensured the success of the peace process.²³⁾

In the early 1990s, the Security Council made other limited efforts to facilitate or observe peace agreements in Africa, attempting to set up a referendum in Western Sahara,²⁴⁾ and deploying observers on the Uganda-Rwanda border,²⁵⁾ and peacekeepers in Rwanda.²⁶⁾ The Council also began its involvement in Somalia at this time (this will

19) See www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/untag.

20) UNITA is the acronym for the Portuguese *Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola*.

21) The peace agreement was based on a set of four documents (including a cease-fire agreement) known as the *Acordos de Paz para Angola* signed on 1 May 1991.

22) See Yvonne C. Lodico, 'A Peace that Fell Apart: The United Nations and the War in Angola', in *UN Peacekeeping, American Policy, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*, William J. Durch ed., New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996, pp. 103-127.

23) See Pamela L. Reed, 'The Politics of Reconciliation: The United Nations Operation in Mozambique', William J. Durch ed., op. cit., pp. 301-304.

24) Disagreements between the parties have prevented the holding of the referendum for over ten years.

25) United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMUR), June 1993-September 1994.

26) United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), October 1993-March 1996.

be dealt with in the next section).

Despite involvement by the Security Council and the international community (successful or otherwise) in attempts to bring these conflicts under control, a large number of other large-scale conflicts in Africa were unable to attract the Council's interest even in the euphoric early post-Cold War period. The Council did not adopt a single resolution in response to major conflicts in Algeria, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Burundi or Sierra Leone.²⁷⁾ In Liberia, the Council was able to apply arms sanctions,²⁸⁾ but did little else, as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervened without Council approval (although the Council later deployed observers).²⁹⁾

3.2 The Turning Point: Somalia

Any euphoria that could be found in or around the Security Council evaporated after its involvement in Somalia. Following the overthrow of its government in 1991, Somalia "collapsed into Hobbesian anarchy",³⁰⁾ with numerous rival factions vying for power. This, compounded with a devastating famine, began to attract the interest of the media, the members of the Council and their constituents, and led to the largest and most ambitious peace operation ever attempted in Africa. In early 1992 the Council established a small security force, known as the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), to help facilitate relief efforts. Finding this inadequate, the Council approved the US-led United Task Force (UNITAF) to use "all necessary means" to create a secure environment for humanitarian activities.³¹⁾ While effective, authority (and responsibility) for the mission was soon returned to the UN, and the transition was made from UNITAF to UNOSOM II. UNOSOM II floundered, as limited attempts to disarm the various factions drew violent responses and began to cause increasingly-heavy UN casualties.³²⁾ On 3 October 1993, a raid against the Aideed faction by US Army Rangers (acting independently and without the knowledge of the UN command) backfired in the full glare of the media spotlight, leaving 18 US soldiers, and up to 1,000 Somalis, dead.³³⁾

27) The Council's involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict (1991-present) did not begin until late 1997.

28) UN Security Council Resolution 788 (1992).

29) For a commentary on the intervention by ECOWAS, see Herbert Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping', *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Winter 1996/97), pp. 145-176.

30) William J. Durch, 'Introduction to Anarchy: Humanitarian Intervention and "State-Building" in Somalia', William J. Durch ed., op. cit., p. 311.

31) UN Security Council Resolution 794 (1992).

32) One incident on 5 June 1993 left 24 Pakistani peacekeepers dead.

33) For a detailed account of the raid, see Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*, New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999.

This proved to be the turning point for the Council's involvement in Africa. Three days after the raid, US President Clinton announced that the US would withdraw from Somalia in six months. Without US support, UNOSOM II found itself forced to gradually wind down its operations, finally withdrawing in March 1995. An acute fear of suffering highly-publicised friendly casualties, or the "Somalia syndrome", became a key factor in the formulation of peace operations. On 3 May 1994, Clinton signed Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD 25), which, according to former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, "dealt a deadly blow to cooperative multilateral action to maintain peace and security."³⁴ PDD 25 set conditions not only for US participation in any peacekeeping operation, but also for the US vote in the Security Council for any peacekeeping operation (including those to be comprised of the forces of other countries), thus influencing the future of all peacekeeping operations. PDD 25 was signed as the unchecked massacre of hundreds of thousands of Rwandans was underway, and the peacekeeping mission there was the first to feel its effects.

3.3 The Last Nail in the Coffin: Rwanda

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was created in October 1993 to oversee the Arusha Accords, which were supposed to bring to an end the civil war between the ruling Hutu and rebel Tutsi groups and set up a transitional government. The accords collapsed when Hutu extremists (fearing a compromise by the government) assassinated the president as his plane was approaching Kigali on 6 April 1994. The extremists immediately proclaimed an "interim government" and began a systematic campaign to eliminate the Tutsi population and moderate Hutus. The prime minister (a moderate) was killed, as were ten Belgian troops that were assigned to protect her. Belgium, who had fielded the only combat-able forces in Rwanda, announced the withdrawal of its troops soon after, and UNAMIR was scaled down to the extent that it was barely able to protect itself.³⁵

With UNAMIR hindered by US delaying tactics in the Council and a general lack of

34) Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished: A U.S.-U.N. Saga*, New York: Random House, 1999, p. 134.

35) The lesson that a superior western intervention force could be repulsed by inflicting a small number of casualties had not been lost on military forces throughout the world. Just one week after the failed US raid in Somalia, a mob of armed civilians, warning of "another Somalia", on the docks where the first US peacekeepers were to land in Haiti, caused President Clinton to order the ship to return to the US. See Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, 'Haiti', in *Coercive Inducement and the Containment of International Crises*, Donald C. F. Daniel, Bradd C. Hayes, Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999, pp. 153-156.

will to deploy units capable of stopping the genocide, the killings went on unchecked. Seeing no action likely to be taken, a representative of one delegation even suggested sending boat hooks to neighbouring countries to at least retrieve the numerous dead bodies flowing down the rivers and stop the spread of disease.³⁶⁾ Although the Council finally authorised an increase in the strength of UNAMIR to 5,500 troops, only 354 were pledged, and only Ethiopia had volunteered to provide a ready unit. Late in June, the Council authorised a small-scale French-Senegalese enforcement operation, but by this time, rebel Tutsi forces had taken control of most of the country, and the intervention force was left protecting refugees and perpetrators of the genocide alike - both of whom were fleeing Tutsi reprisals. Considering traditional French support for the Hutus, many suspected the motives of the French, and the operation ended two months later.

The international response to the genocide in Rwanda had shown convincingly that such a humanitarian tragedy, almost unparalleled in magnitude and speed,³⁷⁾ occurring, as it did, in Africa - even with the benefit of widespread media coverage - could not compel any significant level of involvement. It was a sign of how the Council was to handle future conflicts in Africa. The conflict in Rwanda spilled over into neighbouring Zaire, as Hutu militia, who had fled with the refugees, launched attacks on Rwanda from Zaire. Frustrated that Zaire was making no effort to control the militia, Rwanda, together with Uganda, supported a rebellion to overthrow the government in Zaire. At the same time, the situation in the refugee camps - which were being controlled by the militia - was quickly becoming a humanitarian tragedy. Canada, finally gaining the support of the US and the Security Council,³⁸⁾ offered to lead a multinational force to create a secure environment for the provision of humanitarian aid in November 1996. The situation changed dramatically over the next few days, as the Hutu militia fled the advancing rebels, allowing the refugees to return to Rwanda. Although the situation had been only partially ameliorated, the US seized the opportunity to step down, and Canada reluctantly followed suit. The force was never deployed.³⁹⁾

The rebellion in Zaire was successful, and that country became the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The new government, however, under President Kabila,

36) BBC, 'The Triumph of Evil', *Frontline*, 26 January 1999.

37) The rate of killings during the Rwandan genocide exceeded that of Nazi Germany's genocide of the Jews in World War II.

38) UN Security Council Resolution 1080 (1996).

39) See Simon Massey, 'Operation Assurance: The Greatest Intervention That Never Happened', *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, <http://www.jha.ac/articles/a036.htm>, February 1998.

also failed to meet the expectations of Rwanda and Uganda, who intervened in August 1998 in support of a number of rebel groups. Unable to hold ground, Kabila enlisted the support of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, who deployed troops to defend the government. The Security Council didn't adopt a resolution until April 1999, and even then the Council stopped at a condemnation of the violence and a call for a cease-fire.⁴⁰⁾

Elsewhere in Africa, the Council failed to respond to several other major conflicts in the mid to late 1990s. A border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea flared into full-scale war in May 1998, quickly becoming a high-tech version of World War I trench warfare. The Council adopted three resolutions on the war in the 1990s, but took no action of any description, and it was only in May 2000, as the hostilities were drawing to a close, that the Council (overcoming Russian objections) was able to impose arms sanctions on the two countries.⁴¹⁾ The Council also continued to ignore one of the world's deadliest conflicts in the Sudan, which was spilling over into Ethiopia and Uganda, and instead applied sanctions on the Sudanese government for its alleged involvement in the assassination attempt of Egyptian President Mubarak.⁴²⁾ No resolutions were adopted on the conflict in the Congo either, and although four resolutions were adopted on the ongoing conflict in Burundi, no serious involvement was considered.

The "Somalia syndrome" did not, however, prevent all efforts to intervene in African conflict. The Council maintained its presence in Angola, as UNAVEM III (and later the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA)) attempted, with limited resources, to assist the implementation of a 1994 peace agreement. The languishing peace process finally collapsed in 1998, as the rebel group UNITA resumed full-scale hostilities, and, following the downing of two of its aircraft, the UN decided to withdraw its peacekeepers in 1999. The Council also welcomed an African force in the Central African Republic (MISAB)⁴³⁾, with French logistical and financial support, and authorised a subsequent UN peacekeeping mission⁴⁴⁾ to monitor a peace settlement after a series of mutinies by the armed forces. The situation in the Central African Republic was, however, relatively stable, and was hence a fairly low-risk operation.

40) UN Security Council Resolution 1234 (1999).

41) UN Security Council Resolution 1298 (2000). Russia is a major arms supplier to both Ethiopia and Eritrea.

42) UN Security Council Resolutions 1054 (1996) and 1070 (1996).

43) UN Security Council Resolution 1125 (1997).

44) UN Security Council Resolution 1159 (1998).

3.4 A Glimmer of Hope? Sierra Leone, the DRC and Ethiopia-Eritrea

Criticism of Western double standards when deciding to support or participate in intervention operations (to the detriment of Africa) peaked in 1999, following NATO's unsanctioned war on Yugoslavia (and the subsequent occupation of Kosovo) and the Australian-led multinational intervention in East Timor. Partially as a result of this criticism, the Security Council began cautiously to increase its involvement in some of Africa's lingering conflicts, most notably in Sierra Leone, Ethiopia-Eritrea and the DRC.

ECOWAS had already intervened in Sierra Leone in 1997 to reverse a coup and oust the Revolutionary United Front's (RUF) military junta,⁴⁵⁾ an action that was welcomed retroactively by the Council in April 1998.⁴⁶⁾ In December 1998, the RUF counterattacked, taking control of most of Freetown, but was repulsed by ECOWAS forces, finally signing a peace agreement in July 1999. To assist in the implementation of the peace agreement, the Council established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL),⁴⁷⁾ which was to become a large-scale peacekeeping operation with an authorised maximum strength of over 17,500 military personnel. The RUF did not honour the peace agreement, and in May 2000, took almost 500 ill-equipped and ill-prepared peacekeepers (mostly Zambian) hostage. At the same time, the UK (Sierra Leone's former colonial master) began to deploy in Freetown, with the supposed intention to rescue foreign nationals. The UK's role, however, gradually expanded and the force deployed to bolster the peacekeepers, and to train the Sierra Leone army. The presence of the UK now appears vital to maintaining peace in Sierra Leone.

The Council also began to increase its involvement in the DRC. In late 1999, more than one year after the conflict had erupted, the Council established the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC),⁴⁸⁾ an observer mission that was enlarged, in February 2000, to a modest authorised strength of 5,537 military personnel.⁴⁹⁾ Continued fighting, however, prevented the deployment of the peacekeepers, who began to take up their positions only after a disengagement agreement between the warring parties was reached in 2001. While the conditions on the

45) See Sylvester Ekundayo Rowe, 'ECOMOG - A Model for African Peacekeeping', *African Law Today*, Vol. II, No. 3, October 1998, pp. 1-4.

46) UN Security Council Resolution 1162 (1998).

47) UN Security Council Resolution 1270 (1999).

48) UN Security Council Resolution 1279 (1999).

49) UN Security Council Resolution 1291 (2000).

ground (the conflict is the largest and worst war in the world, spread over an area almost the size of Western Europe) have not been permissive to a peacekeeping operation, the efforts to establish and deploy MONUC, and missions by Council members to the DRC, have shown a certain level of interest in facilitating a solution.

A break in the fighting in the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict, together with mediation efforts by the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), paved the way for involvement by the Security Council. In May 2000, a seven-member special Council mission visited both countries to promote peace. When fighting resumed soon after, the Council applied arms sanctions. Ethiopia's military superiority, however, created the necessary conditions for a peaceful solution, and, following the signing of a peace agreement in June 2000, the Council established the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE).⁵⁰⁾ As a straightforward, traditional peacekeeping operation deployed in a well-marked area between two disciplined armies, UNMEE, unlike the missions in Sierra Leone and DRC, has had little trouble finding countries to volunteer forces.

4. CONCLUSIONS

So where does Africa stand in relation to the Security Council? Does the Council's recent willingness to deploy peacekeepers in Sierra Leone, DRC and Eritrea⁵¹⁾ signal the emergence of a Council that is going to be more actively involved in bringing to a halt Africa's intractable conflicts? Probably not.

The missions in the DRC and Eritrea are relatively small missions, with the primary purpose of overseeing peace agreements. In Sierra Leone, the Council has shown that it has not learned from its mistakes by once again deploying a peacekeeping mission in a situation where there is little peace to keep. The peacekeepers lacked the resources and capability to deal with the consequences of crossing the "Mogadishu line",⁵²⁾ and the ensuing hostage crisis dealt a devastating blow to the mission there. British involvement, while crucial, is essentially unilateral, and there are no guarantees that it will last as long as is necessary to bring the situation under control. Despite the fact that peacekeepers, by supporting government offensives, have flirted with enforcement

50) UN Security Council Resolution 1312 (2000).

51) UNMEE is stationed entirely on Eritrean soil.

52) The "Mogadishu line" refers to the line that peacekeepers cross when moving from impartial peacekeeping to taking some form of enforcement action against one side in a conflict.

measures in Sierra Leone, the Council has not agreed to an enforcement mandate for an intervention force in Africa since the non-starting, Canadian-led force in Eastern Zaire in 1996.⁵³⁾

To bring to a halt many of Africa's conflicts, some level of enforcement measures, or at the very least robust peacekeeping, will be required. There remains little will in the Security Council to support such operations. The policies of members of the Security Council (and other nations with traditional ties to Africa) seem to indicate that the West's emphasis on "African solutions to African problems" still applies.⁵⁴⁾ The US, UK and France have established small-scale programs to assist (primarily through training) African peacekeeping initiatives.⁵⁵⁾ Other countries that are supporting African peacekeeping include Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden.⁵⁶⁾ There is indeed a need to raise African peacekeeping capabilities to a level sufficient to allow the deployment of credible and effective peacekeeping forces, and as such, such support is a welcome step. At the same time, this should not be seen as a complete substitute for Western intervention, considering that no African country or coalition has the ability to field and maintain a competent, combat-ready force for peace enforcement, and even in terms of peacekeeping, African forces lack both financial and logistical resources.⁵⁷⁾

Of course, the West cannot be expected to step in and solve all of Africa's conflicts. As one diplomat pointed out, the development of "good governance" in many parts of Africa is a key factor in bringing peace.⁵⁸⁾ This is indeed largely dependent on "African solutions". Notwithstanding, it is the duty of the Security Council to actively involve itself in the maintenance of international peace and security, and there is nowhere more in need of such involvement than Africa.

53) Although the Council acted under Chapter VII of the Charter in authorising MISAB in the Central African Republic in 1997, the mandate only authorised the participating states "to ensure the security and freedom of movement of their personnel", a given in any peacekeeping mission. See UN Security Council resolution 1125 (1997).

54) See Stephen Metz, 'African Peacekeeping and American Strategy', in *Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement in Africa: Methods of Conflict Prevention*, Robert I. Rotberg ed., Cambridge: The World Peace Foundation, 2000, pp.70-78.

55) In the late 1990s, the US established the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), the UK established two British Military Advisory and Training Teams (BMATTs), and France established *Renforcement des capacités africaines de maintien de la paix* (RECAMP).

56) See Eric G. Berman and Katie E. Sams, *Peacekeeping in Africa: Capabilities and Culpabilities*, Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2000, pp. 333-355.

57) For a series of interviews on the possibilities of African responses, see Ericka A. Albaugh ed., 'Preventing Conflict in Africa: Possibilities of Peace Enforcement', Robert I. Rotberg ed., op. cit., pp. 111-210.

58) Interview with representative of permanent member of the Security Council, New York, November 2000.

So how can the Security Council be encouraged to increase its involvement in Africa's conflicts? Three measures can be considered. One would be to improve media coverage of conflicts in Africa (and of African affairs in general). Most of Africa's conflicts today remain under a virtual media blackout.⁵⁹⁾ Increased awareness - particularly among the populace of influential Council members - of the existence of conflicts would be an effective means of attracting Council interest. The involvement of well-known public figures in peace negotiations can also be effective. The Council has recently begun to show an interest in the peace process in Burundi due to the involvement of former South African President Nelson Mandela as mediator.

The second measure would require implementing peacekeeping reform (by both the Security Council and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations) as proposed in the so-called 'Brahimi Report'.⁶⁰⁾ The adoption of proposed measures to improve consultations by the Council with troop-contributing countries (TCCs), and the adoption, by the Council, of mandates more appropriate to the conditions on the ground, could encourage a greater willingness for Western countries to participate in peacekeeping in Africa. More meaningful consultations with key TCCs, and greater appreciation for the unstable nature of the peace process in Sierra Leone when formulating the mandate for UNAMSIL, would have resulted in a more successful mission; furthermore, the Secretary-General would undoubtedly have had less trouble in securing pledges for participation by UN member states in the mission.

Finally, there needs to be more effort made by African countries (particularly those who are members of the Security Council) to attract the attention of the Council to conflicts on the continent.⁶¹⁾ Small countries with small economies and military forces have, in the past, demonstrated the ability to be influential and driving members of the Council, as Slovenia did in its 1998-99 term as a non-permanent member. Delegations that are well-prepared and determined to make themselves heard in Council deliberations, have the ability to move the Council and be a force to be reckoned with. African members of the Council lacking in economic and military power could benefit by developing such 'diplomatic power', and attract interest in African conflicts in the Council.

59) See Virgil Hawkins, 'The Price of Inaction: The Media and Humanitarian Intervention', *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, <http://www.jha.ac/articles/a066.htm>, May 2001.

60) UN Document A/55/305-S/2000/809.

61) It should not be forgotten that Rwanda was a member of the Council during the 1994 genocide. Chaos in Rwanda at the time and a change in government rendered the Rwandan delegation unable to participate effectively in the decision-making process of the Council.

Without such efforts (both from within and outside of Africa) to involve the Security Council in African affairs, conflicts, such as those in Angola, Burundi, and the border region between Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, will remain partially orphaned, and other conflicts, such as those in Algeria, Uganda, Chad and the Sudan, will remain completely orphaned.