4 THE POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT

The political analysis of conflict argues that current armed conflicts arise from three sources:

- a 'constitutional' crisis caused by a disjunction between the State and society;
- poverty and degenerative change arising from unequal development;
- a systemic crisis arising from transformations in international political, economic, and military structures.

4.1 State-society conflicts

4.1.1 The colonial and Cold War legacies

The current conflicts afflicting Africa are argued by some to arise from the 'original sin' of colonialism and 'incomplete nation-building' (Deng and Zartman, 1991). In Africa, colonisation established a new political and economic order, which included the creation of borders where none existed before, and the imposition of centralised structures of government onto a variety of indigenous political systems. The African states that emerged from colonial rule after World War II inherited boundaries and political systems that had little to do with the cultural and political groupings within their borders. The European model of a unified sovereign nation state, with clearly defined physical boundaries which set the limits of its jurisdiction, was adopted by African states at independence and affirmed by the Charter of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1964.\(^8\)

During decolonisation the heterogeneity within African states was subsumed in single parties or movements in a common struggle against the colonisers. The liberation struggles legitimised anti-statist politics; and some post-colonial states have experienced continued armed struggles between those who won and lost out at independence. The colonial borders, often arbitrary and poorly defined, have also remained a persistent source of disputes between African states. During the Cold War these intra- and inter-state conflicts provided bargaining chips in regional and international political struggles, thus blurring the distinction between internal and inter-state wars.

Cold War ideologies of nation-building provided the means to suppress discontent. In the aftermath of the Cold War definitions of sovereignty are being challenged and states are under pressure to adapt. With no strategic interests in maintaining particular power structures, the North is disengaging from Africa and pressurising African governments to enact democratic and liberal economic reforms. The weakening of imposed ideological models, and of the mechanisms of suppression, has re-awakened latent ethnic and nationality struggles within states, creating new demands for self-determination (Rupesinghe, 1992b). Deprived, at the same time, of external largesse, those elites who have dominated since independence have become more repressive in an attempt to retain economic and political power. Within this framework, internal wars are seen as a struggle over political power in which the State is a focal point of competition (Rupesinghe, 1989). If colonisation
initially fostered a process of State formation, the current internal conflicts are involved in deconstructing the State.

4.1.2 The 'defective State'

Africa's internal conflicts have been linked to the inchoate nature of African states, and the absence of political structures which could regulate competition and cooperation between different interest groups, or exert control (Zartman, 1985). Colonisation failed not only to create the necessary political institutions for the transition to independence, but sowed many of the seeds of current internal conflicts. In many places colonial racial ideology hardened ethnic divisions and created uneven development patterns between regions, and among ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups.

This legacy may be seen in the empowering of Uganda's northern martial tribes, the construction of Tutsi and Hutu identities, and the north-south division in Sudan. Massacres by the colonisers of Harero pastoralists in Namibia, or of Tutsi in Rwanda, established patterns of political repression that are repeated today. The introduction of weaponry by colonists had a profound impact on political relations within and between tribal and ethnic groups. While some colonial administrations may be credited with establishing structures to manage conflict effectively, elsewhere violence was the main export of European imperialism (Lamphear, 1994).

State formation and the forces of modernisation have broadened and deepened these divisions by concentrating political and economic power at the centre at the expense of the periphery. The weakness and fragility of post-colonial political structures in Africa have allowed the ethnicisation of some states based on patron-client loyalties. For some the State has become a means of security and access to resources. For others it has become an instrument for suppression and exploitation.

Communal loyalty expressed through symbols of nationalism or ethno-regional identity, rather than class, provides the capacity to mobilise political action on a large scale. In the absence of other structures, territorial, linguistic or religious sentiments provide a basis for political security. These ethnic sentiments are often interpreted by the State as security threats, resulting in the bolstering of armed forces, and greater suppression by the centre. As the State strengthens its repressive capabilities, its ability to establish communication and bargaining networks between itself and society declines. In this 'defective' or weak State, conflicts arise from a crisis of governance, and the absence of political structures and strong civil institutions which could mediate or manage conflict.

4.1.3 The 'predatory State'

For many peasants, pastoral communities or urban poor, who live on the margins of society, the State appears illusory. Their views rarely penetrate the capital. Day-to-day they are reliant on their own means of survival, articulated through the household or community in which they live. If the State impacts upon them at all, it may be in a 'predatory' form, through taxation or as a 'cattle-rustling apparatus' (Odhiambo, 1991). The monopolisation of power by a central elite at the expense of
the periphery produces a model of the predatory State, where control over the political system provides a means to extract resources from society.

This predatory State is intimately linked to the dominance of the political landscape by the military. Many African governments have come to power with the backing of the military, and in many countries the army is a dominant political force. In 1983, 24 of the 50 African governments were controlled by the military; and between 1960 and 1986 there were 144 military coups (Zwi and Ugalde, 1989). In part, this is a legacy of the colonial era. The model of a nation-state protected by security forces was a colonial import. Colonial powers invested as much in developing African military institutions as in developing political institutions. Military service was a source of education for many of Africa's future leaders.

Although accurate data are difficult to obtain, an examination of the economic performance of African countries reveals the effects of the security sector. Military expenditure reduces expenditure on development, monopolises trained personnel, uses up foreign currency, and lessens the possibilities for equitable wealth distribution. The technocratic bias of the military means that they tend to favour industrialisation rather than agricultural development. The most indebted African countries are those whose military debts form the largest share of their total debt.

The integration of the military establishment in the national economy is well established in several countries. In Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia, state control of the economy reached its height under military governments (Markakis, 1994). In Sudan under Nimeiri the creation of special trading enterprises controlled by the military enabled army officers to obtain concessions on farming land, for example, the mechanised schemes in the Nuba Mountains, a factor in the 'ethnic clearances' currently taking place there (African Rights, 1993a). Similar links between the military and trading enterprises existed in Somalia during the Barre regime. In Liberia commercial links exist between Nigerian military officers of ECOMOG and the Nigerian military government. Under such regimes the basis of the conflict between the State and society is as much one of commercial interests as ideology.

4.1.4 Resolving State-society conflicts

This statist or constitutional analysis of conflict focuses on what are essentially conflicts over governance and power as symbolised in the State. Prescriptions for the resolution of these conflicts tend to focus on the creation of institutions or mechanisms to manage conflict between contending political forces.

Internal solutions are sought in a dialogue on new definitions of State and nation, the creation of democratic institutions, constitutions (e.g. federal or confederal models), and electoral processes which enable political competition and cooperation, and laws which protect individual, ethnic, and religious minority rights. The search is for a new compact between society and the State, by promoting new forms of co-operation through civil institutions, and coalitions of civic organisations (trade unions, NGOs, civic forums).

Internationally, solutions are being sought in the creation of new, or the strengthening of existing, regional (OAU) or global (UN) institutions for managing internal conflicts (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). This involves dialogue on the limits of
sovereignty, and international codes of conduct for the preservation of the rights of individuals and groups. The idea is to transform the arenas and structures through and about which conflict can take place. This institutional approach recognises that the resolution of armed conflicts must be a political process, involving the building of political institutions and structures that ensure a sense of political and economic participation and security for all citizens (Zartman, 1985; Deng and Zartman, 1991; Rupesinghe, 1989).

The application of these prescriptions to date has been less than promising. For example, the aid-democracy conditionality policies imposed by Northern donors on Africa have not only failed to provide sufficient investment to finance political transitions, but have also failed adequately to address questions of legitimacy and rights. Democratic conditionality confuses legality with legitimacy. Democratic practices are the outcome rather than the cause of political change. Elections can 'legalise' illegitimate regimes. In Somalia, the UN attempted to diffuse the technology of democracy through lavish peace conferences, and the formation of regional and district councils, without properly consulting with people on the legitimacy of those bodies.

In seeking a resolution of political conflicts the emphasis should be less on the promotion of legal institutions and procedures, and more on promoting social consensus on the rules that govern political life (Perez, 1992). Human rights conditionality should focus on the obligations and responsibilities of national governments and the international community to the poor and marginalised, rather than on the current negative definitions of human rights by Northern governments, who seek to limit state power. Strengthening the structures of civil society and empowering the marginal sections of society to influence the functioning of the State may be part of this process. In the context of existing wars, the process of identifying and working with legitimate civil or political structures must start during the conflict.

Implicit behind this model of intra-state conflict is a particular Hobbesian view of human nature as having a propensity for violence, which it is the purpose of the State to keep in check. This understanding of the relationship between the individual and society is not necessarily transferable across cultures (Howell and Willis, 1989). Many conflicts take place on the margins of society, involving issues not directly related to the State. There is a need to understand the causes of these conflicts, and how they may become integrated into State conflicts.

The 'defective State' model does not explain why only a few countries in Africa have been wracked by the levels of violence experienced in Sudan, Angola, Somalia, or Rwanda: if the cause of conflict is a weak State, unable to exercise control, or constrained by lack of resources, then one might expect to see more conflict in Africa. Somaliland, for example, a virtually non-existent state, unrecognised beyond its borders, with no coercive powers at its disposal, is currently experiencing less conflict than many countries. Somaliland's advantage may be the weakness of the State, and the strength of its civil institutions. Political solutions to these conflicts may lie less in restructuring the institutions of government, than in separating the idea of the State from the idea of the nation, and re-examining the relationship between the State and society.
4.2.1 Poverty and conflict

Many of the current conflicts are occurring in some of the poorest and most risk-prone areas of the globe, and poverty and underdevelopment are often given as explanations for conflicts. While the 1960s and 1970s saw significant improvements in GNP, life expectancy, infant mortality, and food production, in many developing countries, income disparities between the richest 20 per cent and the poorest sections of the world’s population doubled in the same period (UNDP, 1992). The 1980s saw the number of absolute poor in Africa increase, and Africa's share of global GNP decline. The effects of Africa’s marginalisation in the global economy are felt in the impoverishment of Africa’s semi-subsistence economies.

In pursuit of economic growth, Africa's reliance on the export of traditional primary products has involved the capitalisation of agriculture and the integration of agrarian communities into the market economy. The process has transformed familial relations and the reciprocal and co-operative networks that are integral to the subsistence economy. It has been argued that societies are at their most vulnerable in this transition from a ‘moral economy’ to a market economy; where traditional systems of social security have not been replaced with institutional insurance, or welfare systems (Sen, 1986). Coupled with high population growth and a decline in the price of primary products, the commercialisation of subsistence agriculture in Africa has led to erratic food production and increased food insecurity. In the 1980s Africa became the biggest recipient of food aid. The pressures of commercialisation on the semi-subsistence economy have upset the balance between economic modes of production and the environment, contributing to a shrinking of Africa’s resource base and the growth of local resource conflicts (Twose, 1991).

4.2.2 Development wars

In itself, poverty is not a necessary condition for armed conflict; the poor rarely have the resources to mobilise and revolt. Some of the poorest countries in Africa (Tanzania, for example) have not experienced war. Equally, poverty alone does not explain why Yugoslavia has imploded, rather than poorer Eastern European states. An alternative explanation would be to see poverty itself as an act of 'structural violence' (Galtung, 1990), a manifestation of structural inequalities and the unequal distribution of power, from which armed conflict is one possible outcome. While one might look to the process of impoverishment and the structural causes of poverty as a source of armed conflict, wars are not simply the result of political and economic processes, but are deliberately organised.

Injustice, exploitation, and the denial of human rights provide a fertile ground for violence. Human rights issues, such as land rights, are often latent in the design and implementation of many development projects. However, many development projects ignore the political dimensions of development and this, perhaps more than any other factor, has been responsible for the failures of development policies to benefit the poor (Chambers, 1983). A development model that ignores power differentials or heightens social and economic disparities needs to be re-examined. Sustaining such a model sustains endemic violence.
Current development policies and practices have their origins in the particular development models formulated after World War II. The Bretton Woods Conference of 1945, at which the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were set up, established a prescriptive model of global development. It was posited that economic development could be induced in the ‘primitive’ economies of the ‘under-developed’ world by applying Western technical skills and economic theory, managed by international institutions (Rondinelli, 1993). When US President Truman declared the Southern hemisphere to be ‘underdeveloped’ a modernist paradigm was created which contrasted a ‘developed’ North America and Western Europe with the poverty of the underdeveloped Third World (Sachs, 1993). It provided ‘facts’ and a ‘regime of truth’ by which the Third World was known and could be managed.

While it has been argued that the overall aim of post-war development has been the alleviation of mass poverty, it is questionable whether this has been the sole rationale behind development policies (Kitching, 1990). Development has always been imbued with an ideological content; wars have been fought in the name of development. Official development assistance has always involved more than altruism, and been dictated by security and economic interests rather than the poverty of developing countries (Sachs, 1993; Schrijvers, 1993). At the beginning of the Cold War there was a concern in the West that poverty would facilitate the spread of communism and pose a threat to political stability. A view of development aid as apolitical is deceptive and belies the reality of history.

Modernist thinking continues to shape a perception of history as a linear progression from a condition of underdevelopment to one of liberal, democratic, industrial development. However, the progress, peace, and justice promised by modernity has not been forthcoming (Norgaard, 1994). The South, in particular, shows the other side of development: ‘growing unemployment, ecological destruction, corruption, heavy drug trafficking, crime, civil war, trade in women and children, increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees’ (Schrijvers cited in NCO, 1994). Technological development may enable greater control over nature, but it can also deplete resources. The ‘Green Revolution’ in agriculture has increased production, but it has also increased unemployment and landlessness, and created the conditions for violence (Shiva, 1991). The Kakomba–Degomba violence in Ghana may be partly the result of the capitalist development of rice production in the 1970s. The Zapatista uprising in Mexico may be a consequence of Mexican rural development policies, which in themselves were determined by US economic policies (Redclift, 1984). Development conceived in terms of general social advancement and rising living standards is not a costless process: development can hurt.

Economic development does not necessarily bring about a reduction in violence. The IMF riots or rising levels of violence in the North should dispel the notion that economic growth creates political stability. The current conflicts in Africa show that a process of development which attempts to accelerate economic growth and social change is conflict-ridden and conflict-producing. In one sense, the wars in Africa, and elsewhere, could be defined as ‘development wars’ (Miller, 1992). The question may be not whether conflict is an obstacle to development, but whether development, as currently formulated and practised, is an obstacle to peace and stability.
4.3 The political economy of war

The statist analyses of wars does not explain the protracted nature of current conflicts in Africa, and the ability of regimes to survive in conditions that have produced societies in a state of virtually permanent crisis. An alternative framework seeks to explain the persistence of these conflicts through an examination of the political economy of war. It draws links between ‘local’ and ‘internal’ wars, the instability of Africa's subsistence economy, and the marginalisation of Africa in the global economy.11

4.3.1 The new international order

The upward trend in global conflicts has been linked to a systemic crisis in the global economy arising from a restructuring of social and economic systems in the West in the early 1980s (Duffield, 1990; 1994c). The dismantling of the post-war redistributive State during the Thatcher and Reagan years, in favour of an ‘enabling’ State that promotes market values, coincided with the evolution of regional trading blocs, in North America, Western Europe, and East Asia. Significantly, this period also saw a massive military re-arming in the West; global military expenditure reached a peak of $993 billion in 1987.

This process of structural reform is, in part, held responsible for precipitating the collapse of the planned economies of Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War. The acceleration of global political and economic integration which has attended the demise of the planned economies of the East has contributed to a resurgence of ethnic and nationality conflicts rather than peace and stability. Economic regionalisation has involved the marginalisation of non-bloc areas. In Africa this has involved a reverse in economic and social development, a decline in foreign development investment, and the introduction of market reforms and safety-net arrangements, implemented through the World Bank, IMF, and NGOs. The geography of political instability reflects the process of marginalisation, with an upsurge in wars in Africa and Eurasia, and a decline in political tensions in East Asia and Latin America. Violence, it is argued, has become a means of political and economic survival where alternatives are lacking (Duffield, 1994c).

The post-Cold-War period has seen a further disengagement of Europe from Africa as the political rationale for aid to Africa has waned. Despite assurances that assistance to Africa would not diminish in the euphoria of a reconstructed Europe, evidence suggests there has been a significant shift on the part of the North away from development investment to relief assistance for the South (Borton, 1993). In part this has been in support of relief programmes in situations of armed conflict. The provision of relief assistance has become a substitute for foreign policy among Northern countries in Africa.12

4.3.2 Local and internal wars

Economic decline and resource depletion do not explain the different levels and patterns of violence experienced in Rwanda, Angola, Somalia, and Mozambique. Conflict in Africa has a cultural and political dimension, rooted in historic political relations between different ethnic and socio-economic groups within African states (Duffield and Prendergast 1993).
Warfare has a long pre-colonial history in Africa (Lamphear, 1994). Under subsistence conditions, anthropologists have argued that feuding and warfare had a political function of regulating relations between groups and enabling them to adjust to demographic, economic, and environmental change (Turton, 1989). The aim of traditional warfare was not to subjugate the enemy completely, but to establish political ascendancy to ensure control of resources. It could also be a means of symbolically delineating the political and cultural boundaries of ethnic identity (Fukui, 1994). Warfare could only play this role as part of a balanced system of reciprocity where it was bounded by rules which conditioned the scale and nature of warfare, and the mechanisms for its resolution. It is the collapse of this balanced reciprocity that has transformed African warfare 'from a means of adaptation to an agent for destruction' (Duffield, 1990). This collapse, it is argued is linked to the introduction of new forms of exchange relations as the semi-subsistence economy has become integrated into market economies; a shrinking resource base; the decay of governance; and the spread of automatic weapons. The process began with the colonial penetration of Africa and has continued ever since.

In post-colonial Africa, the process of state formation has generally involved the consolidation of centralised government. Constitutional judicial law has replaced 'customary' law, traditional lines of authority have been weakened, and responsibility for the settlement of local disputes, for example, over land, have been appropriated by the State. While the means for resolving disputes and conflicts at a local level have been weakened, national governments have proved unable to manage local disputes, except by repressive measures.

This disestablishment of the customary systems of government has taken different forms. Some have been abolished, while others have been absorbed into the state bureaucracy. In Sudan, under British Indirect Rule, inter-tribal conflicts were managed through 'tribal conferences'. When the Native Administration was abolished by Nimeiri in 1971, responsibility for settling inter-tribal disputes was given to provincial councils. As tribal elders were not represented on these councils, the tribes were disenfranchised and disputes went unresolved, leading to more protracted conflicts (Karam, 1980). In Somalia, the British colonial administration formalised the office of lineage elders (akils) as 'chiefs' and paid them stipends. Under the military regime of Siad Barre, these elders became appointees of the state and thus part of the ruling party and state bureaucracy (Lewis, 1988). Their customary role as peacemakers therefore became subject to party ideology and political manipulation.

The absorption of agrarian communities into market economies generates wealth for some people and impoverishes others. The 'winners' accumulate land, assets, and power; while the 'losers' (often peasants and pastoralists, and particularly women) are pushed on to unproductive land. In Sudan it is argued that as economic decline took hold in the 1980s, and opportunities for generating wealth diminished, the transfer of assets from the politically weak to the politically strong accelerated, with violence increasingly used as a means of effecting transfer (Duffield, 1994b). In the absence of traditional means of resolving disputes, or democratic structures, the introduction of modern weapons in Africa has provided the means for some groups to extend, or redress, this process. The destructive
power of modern weaponry destroys any semblance of balanced reciprocity. As asset transfer has progressed, local conflicts have become integrated into state conflicts. As the survival of these groups is dependent on access to food and sustenance, fighting takes place over the semi-subsistence economy. In the process, the vulnerability of the weak increases and the conditions for famine are created.

4.3.3 The politics of famine and vulnerability

War is probably the single most significant factor explaining the persistence of famine in Africa today. Recent literature linking war and famine has significantly shifted our understanding of famine. Famine is no longer seen as an 'event', and the product of natural causes, but as a 'process' of impoverishment and increasing vulnerability which can lead to starvation. This has added a political dimension to previous economic analyses of food insecurity, vulnerability, and famine.

In a reassessment of Sen's analysis of famines, de Waal (1990) has argued that excess mortality in famines can arise as much from a health crisis due to a changed disease environment, as from a shortage of food. This changed environment results from social disruption as people migrate in search of food or income to preserve their way of life. When survival strategies are disrupted social collapse occurs. Social collapse is associated with the onset of violence; people's strategies for coping do not just break down, but are broken by 'systematic violence'. Under such conditions, vulnerability and poverty arise not so much from climatic or economic change, as from political acts of violence. Conflicts therefore add a political dimension to vulnerability: poor nutritional status and starvation may be the result of political action.

Sen's work on entitlements links famine with poverty. Political vulnerability, however, can affect poor and rich alike. In analysing the causes of famine among the Dinka of Sudan's Bahr el Ghazal region, Keen (1992; 1994) argues that, rather than poverty, it was their 'natural wealth' in livestock that made the Dinka vulnerable to raiding from northern Baggara tribes, who themselves had become impoverished as a result of economic and environmental decline. Cattle raiding deprived the Dinka of their means of resisting adversity. Individuals and families were unable to draw on assistance through reciprocal social ties, partly because of a shortage of cattle, and partly because people proved reluctant to help those who, lacking cattle, were unlikely to return assistance in the future. The vulnerability of the Dinka arose from their political powerlessness; they had been excluded since the mid-1970s from participation in government. The process of political marginalisation and disenfranchisement of the Dinka included the dismantling of the Native Administration by Nimeiri in 1971.

Similar examples of political vulnerability include the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Duffield, 1994a), the Bantu, Rahanweyne and Reer Xamr in Somalia, or the Tutsi and Twa and Hutu moderates in Rwanda (African Rights, 1994). Conventional economic or physical definitions of vulnerability neglect its political dimensions. Within vulnerable groups, women tend to be even more politically powerless than men. Added to the check-list of the causes of vulnerability, therefore, must be political disenfranchisement.
4.3.4 War and permanent crises

The ability of people to reduce their vulnerability and survive conditions of extreme stress is well documented in the literature on 'coping strategies' (de Waal, 1989; IFRC, 1994). Under conditions of extreme stress people are not passive, but employ their intimate knowledge of the environment, or political and social relations, to mitigate against disaster. The disadvantage is that the employment of such strategies can involve permanent losses. The sale of physical assets by the poor under conditions of scarcity can enrich the powerful. In Sudan during the famine in Bahr el Ghazal, merchants, often linked to the government and military, stood to gain from the sale and looting of the Dinka's cattle (Keen, 1992).

Asset transfer has become a feature of African wars and has led to an analysis of a 'parallel economy', which fuels these wars (Duffield, 1994b). The existence of an informal, parallel economy, beyond the control of the State, is well established in Africa. For many people it is an essential source of income and is not necessarily linked to violence. However, attempts by those in power to regulate and control this economy in a situation of economic decline generates violence (Miller, 1981). For example, the criminalisation of khat production in Somalia in 1985 introduced an element of violence when the military tried to control the trade. This asset-transfer economy has a regional and international dimension. In the Horn of Africa, especially Sudan and Somalia, it is supported by parallel currency markets linked to remittances from the Middle East. The buoyancy of Somali currency and the exchange markets in Mogadishu during the war indicates the strength of this economy (Drysdale, 1994).

The violent extraction of assets from the politically weak by the powerful has its own logic when it becomes a means for conflicting parties to ensure their political survival. The parallel, asset-transfer economy is extremely destructive of the subsistence economy on which it thrives. In places it has resulted in the virtual annihilation of certain ethnic groups (e.g. Nuba, Mundari, Uduk).13

The political analysis of famine and war in Africa, which places armed conflict within a historical process, has important policy implications for aid agencies responding to the emergencies created by these conflicts. A framework that conceives of wars and famines as transitory events misses the point that neither famine or war need be temporary if they offer some advantage to the powerful, likely to gain from the process. It is possible to conceive of a 'permanent emergency', developed (consciously or otherwise) to support the survival of the powerful (Duffield, 1994b). Consequently, measures taken to strengthen the coping strategies of the losers with compensatory aid, risk, through the appropriation or taxing of aid, supporting the powerful at the expense of the weak.14 By treating conflict and famine-related conflict within an apolitical humanitarian framework, aid agencies at best risk doing nothing to address the causes of suffering, and at worst become drawn into supporting the continuance of a state of emergency.

Famine and refugees are the final indicators of a process of political impoverishment. When images of the dead and displaced appear on the TV screens, we are too late. Subsequent actions can legitimise a process that has already taken place. Rather than building mechanisms and institutions to treat
these symptoms of war through relief or protection programmes, prior action is needed to preserve the political, economic, and cultural assets that support people's way of life. What is needed more than the protection of victims, is the prevention of victimisation.

4.3.5 Moral survival

This analysis of the political economy of war in Africa links the indigenous and international patterns of development with the rising tide of political violence. Armed conflict is explained as a 'survivalist' reaction to a process of degenerative change. It provides an understanding of how hitherto little-explored elements in these conflicts, such as the parallel economy, contribute to their persistence. It makes clear that wars and war economies are not chaotic but are organised for the well-being of some at the expense of others. In doing so it identifies how international aid can become integrated into the structures that generate and sustain violent conflict. It argues that these armed conflicts are, indeed, complex; and that causes and solutions must be sought in the dynamics of global interdependence, including reform of the international aid system.

The systemic crisis argument needs to be moderated by a consideration of the different ways in which economic or resource factors have an impact on individuals and on society as a whole according to particular historico-cultural factors, and against a background of wars outside Africa. At stake is not just the survival of economies or livelihoods, but cultural identity, status, and political survival. The Sudanese war has been going on since Independence. The overt causes of the conflicts in Mozambique and Angola are rooted not in economic crisis, but in destabilisation fostered by South Africa. Arguably, an economic crisis has more significance in the new regions of instability in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus; but here also conflict is compounded by historical factors which, as seen in Yugoslavia, are centuries old. A deterministic or survivalist explanation alone does not account for the different forms of violence in Rwanda, Somalia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, or Bosnia.

Furthermore, while physical security and economic survival can clearly lead people to support Renamo, Unita, the SPLA or the Somali's warlords (Keen, 1994), political and economic survival need not depend on violence. The anthropologist Mauss (1970) argued that trade can be a powerful incentive for co-operation and maintaining human relationships between groups and individuals. Trading links between northern and southern areas of Sudan are said to have contributed to the reduction of tensions in areas of Western Upper Nile in Sudan (EPAG, 1994). The resumption of trade and opening up of grazing land was an important incentive behind the peace process in Somaliland (Bradbury, 1994b). Is it possible that in times of war, when formal national economies collapse, 'moral' as well as 'predatory' economies can emerge? If so, can aid agencies identify and support such an economy? There are many current examples of civil groups throughout Somalia and Bosnia (and indeed throughout history) who have survived through non-violent stances. These individuals and groups rarely receive any publicity or gain the support of the international community in times of war.
5 GENDER AND CONFLICT

A gender analysis of conflict is essential. Analysis of social relations is generally accepted to be necessary if development interventions are to be successful. Gender analysis in particular has offered an important critique of development programmes. In situations of conflict and war, it is essential to analyse social relations, to understand patterns of power, and the nature of change. Inequalities, injustices, and violence are present in the social relations between men and women in most societies. The social, economic, and political inequalities between women and men not only explain why war affects women and men differently, but also the differential impact of conflict across social groups.

The material, physical, economic, and psychological roles of women are fundamental to the way in which people and communities survive and cope with armed conflict. While armed conflict usually affects women adversely, it can also create new opportunities for women to voice their own needs and concerns. Focusing on gender relationships facilitates a move from an abstract analysis of conflict to a consideration of the individual fears and needs of people caught up in armed conflict. It makes the connections between the impacts of conflict on the personal, private, and public spheres of people.

5.1 The personal sphere

Armed conflict exposes everyone to personal risk, whether civilians or combatants, poor or wealthy. Exposure to risk is to some extent gender-differentiated, and varies in different cultures. Women are extremely vulnerable to violence in a world where men still retain a monopoly on the institutions of power and the technology of violence. Although men are liable to be conscripted for combat, and thus to become military targets, women may be less mobile than men and physically unable to escape the fighting. In Somalia, women in general were able to travel more easily than men between clan territories. However, they were also more vulnerable to sexual violence. This threat of violence can constrain women's mobility and affect their economic roles, with consequences for household food security.

In different cultures, structures of gender roles and power relationships determine women's use and control of resources; and their social status and their ability to act in public affects their vulnerability during times of war. Where women are isolated within the family unit, they may have less access to support from external social networks. Single women, women who have been disowned because of rape, or women who have lost their families, may lose those social networks altogether and therefore be at greater risk.

As well as individual trauma, injury, and impoverishment that women may suffer in war, they may also be affected by the long-term consequences of war, in different ways from men. In gathering water and fuel, women may be more exposed to landmine injuries. As a result of their vulnerability and insecurity, women may be forced into marriage. After war has ended, women may be subject to violence by demobilised fighters, who themselves have been psychologically disturbed by conflict.
The forms of sexual violence to which women are subjected mean that women have particular medical, psychological, and material needs. Personal self-esteem and identity are linked to cultural values and roles placed on individuals in society, as well as personal traits. The upheaval caused by warfare may change women's roles and thus their sense of identity and feelings of self-worth. Loss of a sense of self-worth, of identity and value, can inhibit women's recovery from trauma and prevent them from exercising their rights as individuals and members of society. Women and men have been shown to deal with trauma in different ways as a result of their different gender roles and identities. The social stigma associated with sexual violence may mean that women are in need of individual assistance within a community approach to counselling.

More positively, social disruption in conflict can provide opportunities to challenge assumptions about gender norms. Women's active participation in political struggles can challenge gender stereotypes in positive ways.

5.2 The private sphere

For the majority of women, the family is the principle arena of responsibility. During armed conflict, the family unit is often deliberately targeted, and harm to the integrity of the household can affect the well-being of women. In addition, the suffering of other family members can also have an impact on women.

Conflict can leave women shouldering increased responsibilities. Women may be required to take over tasks previously carried out by men. Such an increase in work can have a detrimental impact on women's health. In cases of extreme necessity women may be forced into socially unacceptable activities, such as prostitution or crime, which can leave them ostracised by other family members. Although women may be required to take on new economic responsibilities, their control over economic resources may not increase to meet those obligations. The loss of male family members can threaten women's claims to resources. Women may be forced to sell off their own assets, such as animals and jewellery, in order to survive, which will affect their own future livelihoods. Many such 'coping strategies' involve sacrifices on the part of women.

On the other hand, significant advances in women's position have often taken place when communities face crisis during war or famine. Changes in the household and community sexual division of labour as a result of conflict can be a source of empowerment, as women learn new skills and gain confidence, public respect, and status. All too often, such gains are lost in post-conflict readjustment. Whether those advances can be maintained, and channelled in positive directions, or are lost in the process of recovery and reversion to old ways of doing things, are challenges that face women, communities, governments, and civil organisations in post-conflict situations.
5.3 The public sphere

In the public sphere there are a range of related macro and micro issues concerning women. In times of war, women's cultural roles may be used to reinforce and reconstruct ethnic identities. Cultural perceptions of the vulnerability of women can mean that women are the targets of sexual violence, as a means of symbolically disempowering whole communities. Ethnic and religious fundamentalism may increase restrictions on women's rights by enforcing strict codes of dress and mobility. The same gender bias may mean that women are denied resources which are vital for their own and their family's survival and recovery. While community structures can provide support and protection for women in war, women's specific needs are often neglected. Women's needs may be concealed behind a facade of 'community' needs, as represented and interpreted by men.

The lack of protection of and respect for women's rights remains a serious omission in international responses to wars. The UN has so far failed to condemn the atrocities against women in Bosnia in concrete terms, even less so in Somalia, Mozambique, Rwanda, and other war zones. Underlying the failure to address this subject is a failure by governments, the UN, and NGOs alike, to deal with domestic violence against women, which is a permanent feature of many societies at 'peace'. The violence against women in wars has only brought into the public sphere endemic violence against women in most societies.

5.4 Conflict and power

The impact of armed conflict on gender relations differs between different societies. At best a fundamental change in gender relations may take place; at worst they may harden, or simply be rearranged. Opportunities for change exist, and recovery provides a critical threshold where the action of agencies, civil groups and the state may be able to affect gender relations positively. Women's work as peace and human rights activists is well documented in the North but less so in the South. In Somaliland women had a critical role in seizing the initiative at a critical moment and lobbying for peace. It is important to document these matters. Not only do they highlight the critical contribution women can make in reducing tensions in conflict, but also the real potential for people to resist the inevitable, survivalist trends of war.

The inequalities between men and women exemplify the imbalances of power that lie behind conflict. Gender analysis therefore provides an analysis of war as an expression of the exercise of power. Rape physically and symbolically exemplifies the exercise of power by the powerful over the powerless. The challenge in development and in responding to situations of armed conflict is to create conditions in which imbalances of power and domination of one gender, ethnic or socio-economic group by another do not occur. By pro-actively supporting women's rights, development agencies have indicated that 'solidarity', instead of 'neutrality', is a real option in development, though success has so far been limited.
6 THE TURBULENCE OF CHANGE

In a cursory review of current development literature, 'change' and 'process' appear as key words. Although, arguably, development theory has shifted some way from modernist ideas of linear progress towards a more specific, locational understanding of underdevelopment, much of the language of developmentalism still views development as a linear sequence of change, from 'under-developed' to 'development', from 'vulnerability' to 'sustainability', from 'relief to 'development'. In this normative framework armed conflict appears, if it at all, as an abnormal, dysfunctional, and temporary event.

A view of conflict as an unusual event in the smooth and slow progress of states and communities towards 'development' proves to be of little use in understanding and responding to the growing number of wars. Furthermore, this view obscures the role that conflict plays in the process of development, and the nature of war itself as a process. It does not help in understanding the complexity and velocity of change, or turbulence, that occurs with the onset of violence. Development is not necessarily linear, not necessarily slow or gradual. The outbreak of conflict can rapidly undermine any semblance of progress. Models developed to deal with 'natural' disasters are ill-suited to dealing with systemic crisis and political fragmentation. Treating conflicts and the complex emergencies they generate as short-term problems, shows a failure to appreciate the nature of the current wars, which have proved to be durable, and more pervasive in their destruction of people, communities, and infrastructure than natural disasters.

War creates a new social reality for those affected by it and for agencies responding to it. In war unpredictability and crisis become facts of life both for those 'being developed' and for those 'doing development'. Agencies can no longer continue to respond to sudden crises in the traditional way, by ignoring them or reacting after the event. The old distinctions between relief and development which this view encourages hinders one's ability to help poor people to cope with turbulent change. If conflict is to be incorporated into developmental or relief policies there may be a need for 'a more refined analysis of what change is' (ACORD, 1991b).

Recognising uncertainty has implications for development planning. The transitions between emergency, rehabilitation, and development are not neat and tidy. Not everything is knowable beforehand. Programming must be open to future uncertainties, future opportunities, and the possibility of future conflict. There is a need to be open to learning and multiple perspectives. Programming in project-sized packages, ignores the non-projectised realities around them. Over-planning of development and relief programmes can result in wastage, when situations suddenly change. Large operational structures and bureaucracies are often the first victims of conflict.

Accepting that development is a turbulent and often conflict-producing process, implies a need to strengthen people's capacities to cope with and survive future shocks and crises. In the same way that gender analysis has become mandatory for many agencies, conflict analysis may also need to become an integral part of assessment, design, and monitoring. Many of the principles of strategic long-term programming, such as participation, the employment of local knowledge,
resources, and management capacities, cannot be ignored when responding to short-term needs. Conversely, dogmatically ignoring short-term needs can compound long-term problems. Countries where governments have integrated relief, rehabilitation, and development have had the most success in alleviating hunger (Dreze and Sen, 1989).

Conflicts are not the result of single factors. Responding to situations of armed conflict may require an understanding of the linkages between individual actions; economic, political, and ecological change; and the ability to absorb new information and confront new realities. It requires an awareness of how conflict might be used by some people to further their own ends, and of their sources of support. It requires external agencies to be aware of how their own contributions may compound or create conflict. Because most people survive disaster through their own efforts, rather than those of humanitarian agencies, external interventions need to be planned to take account of local capacities, as well as vulnerabilities (Bastian, 1993). Identifying those variables leads to an understanding of conflict as a process of change with multiple actors, and with 'critical thresholds' or 'windows of opportunity' for interventions.

Figure 1 presents a theoretical model of conflict as a process, and provides a possible programming tool (El Bushra and Piza-Lopez, 1994a). It illustrates how certain points in the evolution of a conflict may represent 'critical thresholds' at which interventions may lead either to peaceful outcomes, or a descent into conflict. In Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda, the failure of the UN and regional governments to take advantage of certain 'windows of opportunity' allowed the conflicts there to degenerate and become more protracted (Slim and Visman, 1994). If it is possible to identify these critical thresholds in advance, governments, UN agencies, and NGOs may be able to intervene on different levels to prevent or mitigate the impact of wars. Advocacy on human rights, support for land-right claims, or the resolution of resource-use disputes, for example, might present windows of opportunity for affecting conflict. NGOs and others need to develop an awareness that their own activities can increase local tensions; and that they are themselves part of the process of change, and can therefore influence that change.

6.1 Different perceptions of change

The imperious rationality of much development planning, project appraisal, and emergency programming provides a rarefied language that legitimises actions and political decisions. The designation of something as 'development' or 'emergency' can signal the release and allocation of resources. In an exceptional review of a settlement project for the Giriama in Kenya, Porter et. al. (1991), argue that the 'control-oriented' measures of project planning contrasts starkly with the Giriama's own strategies for dealing with uncertainty in their divination rituals. The Giriama's ability to combine both the physical and spiritual elements of their world to minimise uncertainty proved to have some advantages over the exclusive rituals of the development workers, who offer few alternatives to their linear cause and effect development models; Giriama philosophy is more certain.
Fig. 1 **Conflict as a process**

- **Permanent peace**
- **Improvement in condition**
- **Degenerative change**
  - e.g. erosion of environment
  - political destabilisation
  - economic stagnation, etc.
- **Social, economic and political measures to strengthen civil society**
- **Positive steps taken to involve all parties**
- **Underlying tensions not addressed**
- **Causes not addressed**
- **Fragile peace**
  - Peace agreement
  - Forces withdrawn
  - Political negotiations
  - New institutions
- **Threat of outright conflict**
  - Build-up of tension
  - Attempts at conciliation
  - Situation finely balanced
- **War**
  - Armed forces fight
  - Civilians caught up
  - Negotiations impossible
- **Ceasefire**
  - Failure to restore confidence
- **Resolution**
  - Confidence-building: underlying problems addressed

**Key Concepts:**
- **Critical thresholds:** critical moments when a situation is poised to move in either a positive or negative direction, and when it is susceptible to influence.
- **Stabilising points:** elements within a situation (e.g. people, physical resources, institutions etc.) which tend towards stability.
The application of metaphors of chaos and turbulence to the development environment helps to redefine that environment and to reappraise development policy in the light of the current prevalence of armed conflict. However, there may be a danger with imposing, yet again, Western concepts of time and change on to non-Western cultures. In Somalia a new term, neither complex emergency nor turbulence, has been coined to describe the situation there: the word, *burbur*, means 'complete pulverisation'. It refers to a constellation of crises and the depletion of the material, moral and intellectual resources of Somalia (Samatar, 1994). If one were to use 'complete pulverisation' to describe what we now call complex emergencies or turbulent environments, would this produce different policy formulations? The question is whether adding other words like turbulence to the dictionary of development terms, brings development and relief organisations any closer to understanding the actual perceptions and the day-to-day decisions of those affected by conflict? Do participatory methodologies of analysis have something to offer in this respect?
7 RESPONDING TO CONFLICT

War is not a new phenomenon to humanitarian agencies. The ICRC and some of the oldest NGOs, such as Save the Children, Oxfam, and more recent creations, such as Médecin sans Frontières, Médecin du Monde, Health Unlimited, and Concern, were all born from a response to historic situations of armed conflict. As governments and social services collapse under the weight of armed conflict, the formation of civil organisations, such as NGOs, appears to be an inevitable response in many societies; in Europe in the last three years a wave of new NGOs have emerged in response to the war in former Yugoslavia. In their organisational growth many humanitarian NGOs have moved away from crisis intervention to longer-term development work (Korten, 1990). Perhaps because of an implicit belief that political stability can be achieved through development, conflict as an issue has tended to drop from the agendas of NGOs. It is now clear that armed conflict can no longer be considered an exceptional event or an isolated issue. It is a pervasive element on the development landscape, pushing millions of people into abject poverty, and causing severe social trauma, political dislocation, and environmental damage. Conflict in the form of complex emergencies has forced its way back on to the agenda of those humanitarian organisations working for justice and the alleviation of poverty. As the nature of emergencies has changed so too has the nature of external intervention.

7.1 Aiding conflicts

The United Nations, governments, and NGOs are spending vast resources in mitigating the impacts of current wars. Since the 1980s, parallel to processes of economic reform and the rolling back of state structures, there has been a shift in the international aid system away from development investment towards relief assistance (Borton, 1993). Short-term relief assistance, it is argued, is becoming institutionalised as the main response of the international community to situations of armed conflict. Many NGOs, once radical movers in development, have expanded on the back of these conflicts and may be becoming accommodated to them.

This process of institutionalisation can be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s and the phenomenal growth of humanitarian NGOs in response to emergencies generated by conflicts, mainly in the Horn of Africa. The Biafran war in 1968-70, when several medical volunteers criticised the Nigerian government, established a precedent for NGOs operating within countries without the authorisation of the state (Finucane, 1993). In the mid-1980s, during the wars and famines in the Horn of Africa, NGOs, under the banner of neutrality and humanitarianism, crossed borders and reached places the UN could not, constrained as it was by Cold War politics from intervening politically. The cross-border operations in Eritrea and Tigray are celebrated examples of this (Duffield and Prendergast, 1993). In these operations NGOs covertly provided a channel for donor funds into rebel areas. This set a pattern for a division of labour that has subsequently become formalised in sub-contracting relations between the UN, donor governments, and NGOs.

The Gulf War and subsequent crisis in Kurdistan caused a further change in the international relief system, in two respects. Firstly, attempts have been made in
the UN to strengthen its humanitarian wing, through the creation of a Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) to co-ordinate relief operations. Several government donors, including the British ODA and the EU, have also created their own emergency teams. Secondly, parallel to this, the UN has expanded its peacekeeping role. Of the 29 peacekeeping operations launched by the UN since 1948, 16 have been initiated since 1988. Between 1991 and 1992 the UN bill for peacekeeping rose from $600 million to $2.8 billion and was projected to reach $4.3 billion in 1993 (UN, 1993).

The expansion of UN peacekeeping forms part of the UN Secretary-General's current vision of the UN's policing role in the new world order (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Originally not provided for in the UN Charter, peacekeeping emerged early on in the Cold War as a safety-valve to prevent regional conflicts from escalating into East-West global confrontations. Since the military intervention in Kurdistan, UN peacekeeping has become a global growth industry, and has changed from merely observing cease-fires to more complex tasks of relief, rehabilitation, and development. What some have termed 'military humanitarianism' has arisen, characterised by the creation of 'safe havens', the erosion of national sovereignty to protect human rights, and the enforcement of economic sanctions. While the precedent for UN peacekeepers to take on non-military duties stretches back to the 1960 Congo crisis, what is particular about the current period is the interweaving of civilian humanitarian operations, through the UN, bilateral agencies, and NGOs, with military protection.

For some who insist on, as yet undefined, universal values of humanitarianism, the growth of military involvement in humanitarian relief operations represents a positive step in meeting the challenges of providing aid and protecting rights in increasingly dangerous environments (Weiss and Minear, 1993). For others it highlights some disturbing trends where aid, foreign policy, and defence are integrated in the same agenda (ActionAid et. al., 1994), and raises the spectre of a new form of colonialism (Pilger, 1993). For example, a recent document produced by the Dutch government envisages strengthening its emergency capacity by integrating the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Development Co-operation (Dutch Government, 1993). The deployment of British and US troops in Rwanda to undertake humanitarian work, rather than peacekeeping, provides further evidence that relief assistance has become the North's principal means of political crisis management in the South.

Concern at the growing military involvement in humanitarian aid is pitched at several levels. Firstly, the costs of peacekeeping or peace-enforcement operations are enormous. In Somalia, for every $10 spent by the UN on military operations, $1 was spent on humanitarian work. There is a real concern that expenditure on military operations diverts resources from non-emergency development investment. Clearly, peacekeeping has benefits for those military establishments which are searching for new roles after the Cold War.

Secondly, there is concern that the merging of aid and foreign policy will mean that decisions on humanitarian aid and human rights are increasingly dictated by geopolitical considerations rather than human need. The high media profile that military interventions receive turns a conflict into an event. The sound-bites of
'chaos' and 'anarchy' provide simple and digestible explanations that reinforce 'natural disaster' images (Lewis, 1993). The causes of the conflict become confused with international geopolitical agendas. One consequence is the increased targeting of aid workers by combatants.

Thirdly, an acceptance of military humanitarianism represents a further institutional accommodation by the North to the political crises and conflict in the South that involves measures which help to sustain these crises. As seen in Somalia, humanitarian objectives can become easily lost in the bureaucracy of military organisation, as security considerations for UN forces take precedence over humanitarian needs (African Rights, 1993b; Bradbury, 1994b). Military intervention reduces aid to a technical fix, and detracts from a search for long-term solutions. Negotiated access programmes, while retaining an aura of neutrality, legitimise the military protagonists in the conflict. The manipulation of relief supplies by military factions, or payments made by the UN to those factions, help to sustain the war economy and weaken alternative civil structures. This may prolong the war by taking responsibility away from local leaders and undermining local reconciliation processes.

Finally, while a humanitarian imperative to protect rights may be the stimulus behind military intervention, it is increasingly clear that military peacekeeping operations themselves can become corrupted and be corrupting. Although human rights abuses often play a critical part in fuelling armed conflict, human rights are given a low priority by UN officials who oversee field operations. The down-grading of human rights is a casualty of 'misguided neutrality', where UN officials seek to establish impartiality in their roles as mediators (Human Rights Watch, 1993). In Bosnia and Somalia human rights abuses, war profiteering, and the encouragement of prostitution, by UN peacekeeping forces is well documented (African Rights, 1993c; Ashdown, 1994). Far from protecting rights and reducing conflict, peacekeeping operations can become a new source of conflict.

7.2 Beyond the relief model

While much has been made of the paradigm shifts in development practice from technology-centred to people-centred, and from blueprint to process development (Chambers, 1993), most NGO emergency relief programmes remain externally managed, non-participatory, and heavily dependent on expatriate staff. Relief aid is delivered to those in need, as defined by the implementing agencies. As communities turn into 'vulnerable groups', the emphasis is on 'intervention in' a situation, rather than 'working with' people. The emphasis on the modalities of control helps agencies to ensure neutrality. The aura of neutrality and charitable altruism is reinforced by the fundraising images of humanitarian relief organisations. The typical iconography of the child refugee plays on Western ethnocentric notions of childhood and reinforces a perception of 'vulnerable dependency' (Gibbs, 1994).

A consequence of externally-managed, technically-orientated relief programmes is that agencies often fail to recognise local resources and skills (particularly those of women), and miss the opportunity for involving local communities in the management of relief (Slim and Mitchell, 1992). At the same time the new
bureaucracies, such as logistical units and refugee commissions, that are created, may have their own interest in maintaining a dependent constituency (Harrell-Bond, 1993). The channelling by donors of resources through NGOs shifts accountability and responsibility away from national governments, local leaders or communities, thus undermining local capacity and creating further dependency. Relief aid often creates tensions among local organisations or refugee and host populations over access to external resources. Relief aid can therefore undermine co-operative relations rather strengthen them (Harrell-Bond, 1993).

A historic analysis of development argues that the neutrality of aid is an illusion. Even the most benign forms of development can disturb the status quo. Any intervention can potentially affect, positively or negatively, the dynamics of a conflict. The provision of aid through 'neutral' NGOs provides donors with the means to maintain a political distance, while exerting some control over the resources disbursed. Prime examples are Bosnia and Rwanda, where humanitarian aid has become an excuse for the lack of political action by donors. By providing assistance, NGOs themselves become part of that dynamic; by effect or intent they act politically. This has important policy implications for donors and aid agencies responding to the emergencies generated by these conflicts.

Gender analysis indicates that conflict can be a positive catalyst for change. Gender relations may change as social systems are disrupted, with women shouldering added burdens, but gaining increased status and independence at the same time. New civil institutions can emerge to challenge the nature of the state or regime. Opportunities may arise for civil organisations to focus on issues of human rights and economic and political development. Local institutions, women's organisations, and associations of professionals may have a crucial role to play in developing grassroots peace-building. For example, the joint efforts of lineage elders, women's organisations, and traders in Somaliland to restore a fragile peace after four years of war, indicates what is feasible, when the conditions and will are there (Yusuf, 1993; Bradbury, 1994b). Foreign agencies can have a role in helping to create the conditions for such processes to multiply. They will also need to watch for the erosion of women's new-found independence (as is currently happening in Eritrea) and act to support the consolidation of changed gender relations where appropriate. If emergency and humanitarian assistance remains strictly defined in terms of food aid and medical relief, it runs the risk of undermining local production systems and local capabilities. This in turn can lead to a weaker civil society and the reinforcement of unpopular and undemocratic government or movements.

Acting on these conditions requires sensitivity, a level of analysis, and a long-term perspective that are often absent from short-term relief operations. It can sometimes require agencies to make political choices. Solidarity with the ANC, or with the TPLF and EPLF, for example, recognises that in some conflicts choices may have to be made. Mediation, whether direct or through aid, may perpetuate war by meeting 'villainy' halfway (Miller, 1992).