

War and Famine in Africa



Mark Duffield



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1 INTRODUCTION

This report stems from a concern of Oxfam that, during 1991, emergency work in Africa would be dominated by situations of famine connected with war. Since it is believed, moreover, that a strong relationship exists between the two, a broad report was requested to inform Oxfam's position on this important issue.

1.1 The International Context

Since the end of World War II, there have been no direct conflicts between the leading states of the developed world. This peace, however, has co-existed with a growth of violence and war in the Third World, typically in the form of proliferating internal or intra-state conflict. Moreover, most casualties have been not soldiers but civilians. Millions have now been killed, maimed, bereaved, or made destitute by such wars. The end of the Cold War, apart from confirming peace in the West, has helped to focus attention on the growth of civil wars elsewhere, and to highlight the fact that, whether arising from ethnic, environmental, or political and civil conditions, such internal conflicts are largely beyond the bounds of current international conventions on warfare or accepted political structures (Rupesinghe, 1990). In many respects, the present period is one of great change and uncertainty as traditional definitions of sovereignty and the state, from Europe through the Middle East to Africa, face major challenges and pressures to adapt.

1.2 Oxfam's Experience in Africa

Oxfam's recent experience in Africa is witness to the growth of internal conflict and its devastating effects on civilian populations. The effects of the war in Eritrea and Tigray became increasingly apparent from 1985. During 1986, the nature of the conflict in South Sudan began to manifest itself clearly. In the same year, due to increasing need, Oxfam committed itself to relief work in war-torn Mozambique. By 1987, despite hopes to the contrary, the situation in Northern Uganda had begun to signal a continuation of insecurity. Around the same time, a better understanding of the effects of war in Northern Sudan and Ethiopia was being developed. Following more than a decade of experience with refugees in Somalia, the outbreak of civil war there in 1988 marked a major deterioration in the situation. In the same year, an office was opened in devastated Angola, and the need for emergency intervention made evident. Alongside this ongoing involvement, more recently conflict has again erupted in Rwanda. Thus, from the Horn, through Central to Southern Africa, since the mid-1980s, Oxfam has increasingly found itself having to deal with the effects of war and violence.

The cumulative effect of this experience suggests that conflict may have become a long-term problem. In general terms, emergency work, often related to famine relief, has come to characterise those countries affected by war and insecurity. This is especially the case if drought is also encountered. Indicative here is the pattern of Oxfam's emergency spending. During the 1989/90 financial year, out of a combined Catastrophe and Earmarked Budget of nearly £17 million, around 80 per cent was spent in Africa's war-affected countries (Emergencies Unit, 1989/90). In some places, Sudan and Somalia, for example, established development projects have been undermined by the spread of

conflict. In Ethiopia and Southern Africa, on the other hand, due to war preparedness or long-standing insecurity, programmes have been mostly constrained from the outset within a relief mode. The typical response of field staff in such circumstances has been one of frustration and despair as the scope for any significant move beyond relief work remains limited or non-existent.

Oxfam's response to the upward trend in internal conflict in the Third World¹ can be roughly divided between those initiatives located in Oxfam House and those based in country offices. The former relate more widely to the Third World, and since civilians, often Oxfam's beneficiaries, are the main casualties, they are concerned with the profound issues of policy that this situation presents. Earlier work has focused upon the arms trade and the relation between gender and war. The Public Affairs Unit is currently assessing Oxfam's response to conflict situations over the past decade. In addition, the PAU has produced a number of relevant publications (such as Smith, 1990). The position with regard to human rights and lobbying is also being examined by the Research and Evaluation Unit. Finally, a consultancy is researching the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and conflict resolution (Fisher, 1990). Taken together, this on-going activity, which closely reflects country concerns, attests to a widely felt disquiet.

With regard to the country offices, the response to conflict has been mainly concerned with the elaboration of appropriate management structures, policy development, and comprehension. With regard to management, while relief work is typically administered by a country office in collaboration with the Emergencies Unit and the appropriate Desk, the effects of war in Africa have marked a new departure. Internal conflict not only creates single-country problems but, in terms of population movements and relief logistics, it has major implications for bordering countries. Since May 1988 there have been five Sudan Cross Border (SDX) Regional Meetings, bringing together staff from Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, and Oxfam House (Sudan, August 1990). They have served as an important forum for debating joint administrative, logistical and policy issues created by the spread of intra-state conflict.

With regard to comprehending the causes of conflict and war, the situation is more diffuse. Comments and analyses are, in the main, scattered throughout numerous Situation Reports, annual reports, country evaluations, and so on. The main exception here, building upon the success of the SDX meetings, was the Kampala Emergencies Conference of October 1989. In addition to the regular SDX countries, representatives from Angola, Mozambique and Namibia were also invited, but could not attend. Besides discussing Oxfam's practical and policy responses to internal conflict, the conference also examined the nature of conflict itself (Oxford, 24/10/89). A submission from the Uganda Office pointed out that most academic approaches either take an objective view that focuses, for example, on the economic trends that underlie conflict, or, alternatively, a subjective analysis is given which concentrates upon the meaning that people themselves give to the events of which they are part (Uganda, October 1989). It was argued that objective and subjective approaches should not be seen as antagonistic but, in fact, as complementary and having much to offer each other. This view was endorsed by the Kampala Conference which, in the resulting resolutions, laid stress upon the need for a

¹ It is a concern shared by other agencies. The Panos Institute, The Inter-Africa Group and IUCN/United Nations Environment Programme, for example, are currently preparing reports which variously deal with the nature and effects of conflict in the Sahel and the Horn.

better understanding of the subjective dimension of conflict, including trauma, and for relief interventions to be planned accordingly.

1.3 A Note on Methodology

In writing this report, a lead has been taken from the Kampala Conference. That is, an attempt is made first to examine the factors underlying famine and conflict in Africa and then to relate these to the reality and logic of warfare. Where possible, Oxfam sources are used. There is a difficulty here, however. Apart from the question of adequate coverage, country offices differ in terms of their levels of understanding, length of operation, and degree of access. In general terms, the Horn and Uganda have a wider experience in this respect. Rather than a country-by-country analysis, especially given the time constraint, the chosen method of presentation is broadly comparative. A country-by-country approach, moreover, would tend to obscure the similarities and resonances that exist across the continent. It is these similarities which underscore the need for a policy to be formulated.

A profound shift is currently taking place in the way that conflict in Africa is viewed. Green (1987) has pointed out the paradox that the economic and human costs of war are immense, yet only in rare instances have they been a matter for serious consideration and policy response. More frequently, war is seen as a short-term problem somehow distinct from the normal run of events. It is interesting, for example, that war and its effects have not been organically linked to the growing problem of food insecurity in Africa. This report is based on a key assumption. That is, that the relationship between conflict and famine in Africa is best sought by examining the specific elements that characterise African famine. In this respect, the report can be seen as a modest attempt to add to the pioneering work of de Waal (1990) who, in adapting Sen's celebrated entitlement theory (1981) to the existing conditions in Africa, has developed a very useful model.

Briefly, de Waal argues that African definitions of famine allow a far wider range of meaning than the term usually denotes in English usage. These meanings can range from poverty, through dearth, to increased mortality and frank starvation. African peoples normally deal with famine by recourse to coping strategies, including a range of practices such as labour migration or the collection of wild foodstuffs, and the management of assets, for example, livestock or craft skills. Coping strategies are the single most important means by which African peoples deal with famine, and in recent famines (for example, in North Sudan in the mid-1980s), they were much more effective than food aid in keeping people alive. Because coping strategies involve a variety of decisions, including that of going hungry in order to preserve assets, the epidemiology of famines is complex; rather than frank starvation, it usually takes the form of disease crises. In Africa, however, there is also a close connection with violence and famine. Conflict disrupts people's coping strategies, or even prevents them operating at all. In these circumstances, especially when such actions are deliberate, frank starvation is often the result.

This report seeks to add to de Waal's model of African famine in three respects. First, by relating Africa's declining economic performance to an emerging new world order. Second, by arguing that the importance of coping strategies is underlined by the growing instability of semi-subsistence. Finally, by analysing the logic and political economy of internal conflict in Africa, which make semi-subsistence and coping systems necessary and inevitable targets, it seeks to make an organic connection with famine and food insecurity. In conclusion, it argues that the international system of public welfare that has emerged to relieve this growing problem requires urgent reform if it is to be adequate to the task.

2 FOOD INSECURITY AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

2.1 The 'New World Order'

Since the 1970s the world economy has entered an essentially new, global phase of development. This economy has, of course, always been 'international'. What distinguishes the present period, however, is its degree of internationalisation. The current informational revolution has transformed the world economy into a single interdependent unit that functions in real time (Castells, 1989). This process has led to profound changes in the developed and under-developed worlds. From within the old industrialised countries of the West, staggering technological advances have been made. This situation has been more than matched by the newly industrialised countries of the Far East which, centred upon Japan, have emerged as the point of fastest growth in the world economy (Hoffman and Kaplinsky, 1988). With regard to the poorest countries in the world, and the poorest sections of the population in the West, the period is equally important, but for different reasons. Following major improvements in health and other social indicators since the end of the Second World War, during the 1970s this progress began to falter (Cornia et al., 1987). These two inter-connected trends form the historical context of this report.

This global restructuring results from major changes in social and economic policy. During the 1970s, partly in response to the challenge from the Far East, the old industrialised countries embarked upon the modernisation of their social and economic systems. While pursued more consistently in the USA and United Kingdom, neo-liberal policies aimed at dismantling the post-war redistributive state, in favour of an enabling state that promotes market values, began to cross all boundaries, and have been implemented by parties of all political persuasion. The collapse of the planned economies of Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War were the most spectacular indications of this trend. Within the market economies a two-tier welfare system has begun to take shape. The economically active sectors of the population are increasingly expected to seek welfare services in the market place; while a safety net, partly constructed from contractual relations between local authorities and voluntary agencies, is being put into place for the remainder (Stoker, 1989). In the world's poorest countries similar market reforms have been introduced in an attempt to halt their decline. In other words, the new world order is characterised not only by an extension of capitalism into remote areas of the world previously unaffected by it, but also by a matched internationalisation of public welfare.

2.2 The Position of Africa

The emergence of a new world order has stimulated some key developments in Africa:

- a. the reinforcement of an earlier colonial division of labour at a time when much of the rest of the world is undergoing rapid change and diversification;
- b. despite attempts at intensification, a decline in the performance of many of these traditional productive sectors, leading to food insecurity;

- c. the growth of internal conflict;
- d. the increasing importance of food and welfare aid mediated by the international community.

Only the first two of these factors are examined in this section. Taken together, these interconnected elements provide an outline of Africa's structural position within the new world order. It should be emphasised that this is essentially a new and emerging development. During the 1960s, many African countries reached what, in retrospect, now looks like a high point of economic development and general prosperity.

The division of labour

The informational revolution that has transformed the leading industrial countries has not been repeated in Africa. Indeed, since the 1970s, the pattern has been for various factors to reinforce rather than change an earlier division of labour based upon the export of primary products. This occurred at a time when other developing countries, especially those in the Far East, were switching to the export of manufactured goods (Josling, 1987). Given the simultaneous technological changes taking place in manufacturing, especially the growing use of synthetic materials (Kaounides, 1990), the increased reliance upon traditional primary products is a major concern, which should be seen apart from the adverse market trends which also accompanied this development.

One factor helping to reinforce the old division of labour has been the decline in foreign direct investment (FDI) in African industry. Although in relative terms FDI in much of Africa has never been great, due to lack of infrastructure and high production costs, it began to decline during the 1970s (World Bank, 1989). To take the example of Britain: over the past decade British FDI in Africa has virtually collapsed. During this period around a third of the companies previously involved have disengaged, leaving Africa's share of British FDI at 0.4 per cent of the British world total (Bennell, 1990). A similar capital flight has been observed for South Africa (Smith, 1990). Investors view Europe and North America as better propositions. Dependency theorists may see cause for quiet optimism in this trend. Since the early 1980s, however, African policy makers have become increasingly concerned. Based upon the experience of the Far East, an emerging view is that trade and investment between rich and poor countries can be beneficial, especially if they result in the transfer of technology. In the prevailing climate, however, the prospects for developing such links are not encouraging.

The IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programmes (together with market reforms that some countries have independently initiated, because they are predominantly aimed at boosting the production of primary products) can be seen as an additional factor which has tended to entrench the old division of labour.

The emergence of food insecurity

The growth of food insecurity² in Africa is a complex phenomenon. Different countries have often arrived at similar ends, although travelling separate routes. In general terms, Africa has continued to sustain a high level of population growth at the same time as *per*

² The concept of food security reflects a change in thinking about hunger and malnutrition. It focuses on the operation of food systems (production, distribution, and consumption) in relation to the lives of the poor and vulnerable (see World Bank, 1986).

capita food production has declined. This has resulted in a growing number of countries consuming more than they produce (de Janvry, 1987). Reflecting an increasing urban demand, there has been a corresponding trend for the import of commercial foodstuffs to increase. So far, this trajectory is not untypical of normal development conditions. Many economically viable countries suffer from food deficits, and regularly import to make up the difference. In the case of Africa, however, the situation is different. In the absence of industrialisation, Africa has continued to rely on the export of traditional primary products to furnish the hard currency to purchase commercial imports. This has occurred at a time when the price of primary products has dropped, effecting a corresponding increase in the relative cost of these imports. Deficits have therefore become increasingly difficult, and in some case impossible, to remedy. Due to reasons of climate or instability, such situations have often been compounded by the highly erratic nature of African food production. Moreover, where local surpluses may exist, a lack of infrastructure often limits the scope for internal market solutions. A major consequence has been the increasing role for external food aid at the same time as it has declined in the rest of the world. In 1987/88, for example, the countries of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda) alone received 13 per cent of total world food aid (IGADD, 1990).

Food insecurity is now an established feature of the African condition. The statistics are staggering. Among IGADD members, for example, 45 million people, or 39 per cent of the total population, are regarded as 'food insecure'. With the exception of Malawi and Zimbabwe, a similar situation exists among the members of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) (Morgan, 1988). With respect to the 'food insecure' themselves, the two largest groups (aside from the growing number of urban poor) are poor rural households and those affected by the growth of internal conflict. In the IGADD countries about 35 per cent of the 'food insecure' (nearly 16 million people) are classed as 'war affected'. In SADCC, since the mid-1980s, food insecurity relating to internal conflict has grown dramatically. It is now estimated that some 12 million people are involved (one third of the population of Angola and half that of Mozambique). They include 6.1 million displaced within their own countries, 1.9 million refugees in neighbouring countries, and 4 million urban people affected by the resulting economic breakdown (Smith, 1990). When the situation in Southern Africa is taken into account, at least half of the total population categorised as 'food insecure' in Africa have been affected by war in some way.

3 COPING WITH CHANGE

3.1 The Intensification of Production

Although, in general terms, there has been a decline in economic performance, this factor should not hide the crucially important fact that, in attempting to achieve economic growth, there have been significant attempts to intensify the production of primary products, including food. While these efforts have fallen short of their goal, from the point of view of this report, their importance lies in their connection with the environment, vulnerability, and conflict.

3.2 Political Overview

Apart from confirming Africa's traditional economic role, the 1970s witnessed major political changes. Many of the still buoyant and emerging market systems became increasingly involved in promoting the external orientation of their economies. In addition, the period was marked by the fall of the feudal regime in Ethiopia, together with the colonial governments of Guinea Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, and Rhodesia. In this manner, an important further step in the decolonisation of the continent was achieved. The new governments of Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique responded by attempting to establish planned economies — events which marked a high point of Cold War rivalry and South African reaction in Africa. The most systematic attempt to develop a planned alternative was that of Ethiopia. As with Angola and Mozambique, however, this venture is now acknowledged as having been unsuccessful (Clapham, 1989). Within the past several years, following the earlier lead of Africa's market economies, all have introduced market reforms. The end of the Cold War has also seen the liberalisation of South African policy. Despite the 'wind of change' that is evident in some countries, however, conflicts continue. Indeed, in both Angola (Angola, April 1990) and Mozambique (Mozambique, 7/11/90) moves toward a multi-party system have led to renewed violence as parties struggle for position.

3.3 The Development of 'Core' and 'Peripheral' Areas

Faced with the limited ability to create value through manufacturing, many African governments, where presented with the opportunity, have had little option but to attempt to intensify both food and primary production for export. Both market and planned economies shared this objective. Where differences existed, they related to the means rather than the ends.

The method of intensification in the market economies has usually taken the form of an increased capitalisation of agriculture. In the Sahel, for example, spending on tractors, animal traction, irrigation works, improved seeds and fertilisers has been involved (PAU, May 1984). In Uganda and Kenya, a similar strategy focusing on small and medium farmers has developed. In Sudan (Sudan, 1987/88) and South Africa (Davies, 1990) agricultural production has been mechanised on a large scale. Such developments have usually involved various forms of state subsidy. In the planned economies, the technical emphasis has been less, with more store being placed upon the provision of basic tools,

seeds and, more than anything else, major attempts at social reorganisation involving such things as resettlement, the formation of communal villages, and the promotion of village-based cooperatives (Morgan, 1988).

Few systematic studies of the social effect of these 'core' developments upon the groups living at the 'periphery' of the countries concerned have been attempted (see Iliffe, 1987). From the fragmented evidence, an argument can be made that core developments have indeed had a considerable impact. In Africa, they have occurred in areas characterised by groups living in various, and often complex, forms of semi-subsistence. Moreover, they have often been directed by politicians or planners who were unaware of or uninterested in this condition. In some countries, for example Chad, Sudan, Uganda and Mozambique, inherited regional differences have either been accentuated or new ones established. The result has been the widespread marginalisation of peripheral groups and the transformation of social and family relations. A number of general comments can be made.

3.4 The Marginalisation of Peripheral Groups

The terms 'core' and 'periphery' should not be interpreted too literally. They are intended more to introduce a sense of internal disharmony. Moreover, the processes involved clearly have a history which reaches back much further than the 1970s. What is at issue is the transformation of Africa's subsistence economies. This has been both a continuous process and one in which key historical events, such as colonisation, have made a major impact. Conflict also plays an important role in the process of social change. It does so, however, within a context defined by such broader developments. The position of this report is that the events of 1970s, since they mark a reversal of the economic growth emerging from the colonial period, can also be seen as signifying an important and distinct stage of development.

Earlier trends in the transformation process would include the development of transnational labour migration (for example, West Africa to Sudan; Mozambique to South Africa) in response to the uneven development of the colonial economies. In addition, for economic and ecological reasons, there has been a tendency for agro-pastoralists to lose livestock and become increasingly dependent upon the variable fortunes of agriculture. The struggles for independence, together with disputes over the settlements achieved (for example, Sudan, Kenya, Eritrea/Ethiopia, Chad, Uganda, Mozambique, Angola, Rhodesia, Sahara Democratic Republic) can also be seen as heralding the modern era of internal warfare. More recent developments have both changed and built upon these earlier trends.

In the market societies, the capitalisation of agriculture has worsened the position of poor farmers in both core and peripheral areas. With regard to the former the expansion of commercial farming has confined them to increasingly degraded land while, for both, economies of scale have often tipped the balance of trade in favour of the rich (Duffield, 1990). Pastoralists have also been affected. Independence, for example, has meant that previously open borders have been restricted. The acceleration of commercial farming has greatly reduced the access to water (Almond, 1989). Before the revolution in Ethiopia, for example, Afar pastoralists in the Awash Valley lost hundreds of thousands of hectares of rangelands to irrigated cash crop schemes (Kebbede and Jacob, 1988).

In the planned economies, marginalisation has also resulted through the process of social reorganisation. Central planning may have assisted some groups, but others have suffered. In Ethiopia, for example, the resettlement programme of the mid-1980s, which aimed to move people from the degraded northern regions to the more fertile areas of the

south west, was detrimental in terms of displacing indigenous farmers, accelerating environmental degradation, and culturally and materially impoverishing the settlers themselves (Oxford, June 1986; Ethiopia, 1987/88). In Mozambique, compulsory villagisation and the suppression of religion and chiefly authority by the government have also engendered disruption and grassroots hostility (Hall, nd). In Angola, as in the other planned economies, large-scale attempts at social reorganisation had the effect of fracturing rural markets, thereby lowering prices and depressing production (Angola, 12/11/90).

This issue of conflict is dealt with in the next section. It is worth pointing out, however, that together with the continuation of a number of long-standing independence struggles (Eritrea/Ethiopia, for example), questions of region, locality and ethnicity have come more to the fore as internal conflict itself has undergone a process of change.

3.5 Patterns of Social Transformation

The transformation of local subsistence economies is a complex issue. The diversity of such economies, together with differences in local conditions, means that no single model of the process can be given. One thing, however, is certain: change has indeed taken place. The high rate of urbanisation is indicative. Albeit from a low starting point, Africa currently has the fastest rate of urbanisation in the world. Its 35 major cities are growing at an annual rate of 8.5 per cent, which means they are roughly doubling in size every nine years. According to current trends, by 2020 more than half of Africa's entire population will be living in towns (Harris, 1989). The pattern is for subsistence economies to weaken and collapse under the combined effects of market forces, political intervention, environmental change, and direct and brutal consequences of conflict. Here, only a few pointers can be given.

The recent intensification of primary production in Africa's market economies coincided with the decline of transnational labour migration. In South Africa, for example, the mechanisation of agriculture saw the transfer of surplus farm labour to industry, thereby reducing the need for Mozambican migrants (Davies, 1990). The expansion of labour opportunities in West Africa similarly reduced the need for migration to Sudan. Within Sudan, labour for its mechanised schemes was obtained from new internal sources, for example South Sudan. In short, the period was synonymous with the development of national labour markets. This is a most significant event, suggesting that patterns of semi-subsistence (that is, the necessity of wage labour or relations of market exchange), rather than being limited to specific groups or distinct seasons of the year, have become generalised and are an essential addition to the family/group-directed activities of subsistence.

Evidence from the period of growth during the 1960s would suggest that semi-subsistence economies existing within market societies need not necessarily be unstable. Under present conditions, however, the mix is not conducive to stability. Poor agriculturalists, for example, having to compete with commercial farmers at the same time as making do with reduced family labour due to migration, have responded by intensifying their methods of production. Time-saving and labour-saving techniques, such as the decline of inter-cropping, crop rotation, strict sowing and weeding regimes, extensive terracing, and so on, have become prevalent across the Sahel (de Waal, 1987). In many respects this intensification has taken place at the expense of traditional drought-resisting methods, thus adding to the erratic nature of food production. A form of intensification has also occurred among pastoralists. The restriction of available rangelands and access to water

has stimulated a change in herd composition and herding techniques. One trend has been for large stock (camels, cattle) to be replaced by small stock (goats) requiring smaller rangelands and browse requirements, and less supervisory labour (Abu Sin, 1982).

Changes such as these at the economic level not only underscore the poor performance of domestic food production in the face of continued population growth: they have also brought about a change in family and gender relations. Labour migration and the penetration of market forces has had the effect of transforming relations between generations in favour of the youth. In many groups, political power has shifted away from traditional lines of authority. At the same time, given that farming is women's work in many regions of Africa, the development of national labour markets, together with the growing necessity of labour migration (usually a male activity), has frequently operated to increase the burden of agricultural and domestic work that women bear and, as group support tends to weaken, to leave them more exposed to external uncertainties.

The tensions and contradictions intrinsic to the process of the social change at a local level tend to produce instability. This instability is an essential ingredient in the dynamic of internal conflict in Africa. Its configuration suggests that, in the long term and under present conditions, it is questionable whether semi-subsistence is a viable socio-economic system. The trend to urbanisation would tend to support this supposition. In recent years, drought and conflict have encouraged this rapid growth. However, in so far as increasing food insecurity is connected to the decline of local subsistence economies, and given that this decline, moreover, is related to conflict, then drought and conflict themselves reflect back and further compound the instability of semi-subsistence.

3.6 The Effects on the Environment

Attempts to intensify the production of primary commodities in core areas of the market and planned economies have had a significant and negative impact upon the environment. Large-scale commercial farming, for example, has degraded fragile soils and added significantly to deforestation. Using a technique that has been dubbed 'agricultural strip mining' (O'Brien, 1977), large areas of bush have been cleared and farmed continuously until the soil is exhausted. Adjacent bush is then subject to a similar treatment. The commercial felling of hardwoods is also depleting Africa's rainforests. Across the Sahel and in East Africa, the numbers of irrigation schemes have grown in an attempt to overcome climatic variation. This, however, has placed increasing pressure on the available supplies of ground and surface water. The waters of the Nile, for example, used to be the main concern of Egypt and Sudan. Intensification, however, has meant that Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have increasingly begun to tap its headwaters (Beshir, 1984). This example serves to show how questions of natural resources and environment have become issues of regional concern (Ulrich, 1989).

The local changes sketched above also have major environmental implications. Some of the arguments here are already familiar: the over-grazing of restricted rangelands, deforestation due to population growth, the geographical confinement of rural settlement, unplanned urbanisation, and so on. Of crucial importance, however, is that the intensification of peripheral agriculture/pastoralism denotes an important shift in the relationship to the environment from subsistence to semi-subsistence as a mode of existence. The former was dependent upon the finite and renewable properties of nature and was careful to husband these properties. Indeed, cultural life revolved around this necessity. Semi-subsistence, however, as a result of having to adjust to market forces, has, perforce, adopted an attitude towards the environment similar to that found in core

commercial activities. That is, nature is seen as an infinite resource that can be exploited at will for short-term gain. This shift in attitude, brought about by force of circumstance and contrary to traditional practice, is another factor that marks the instability of semi-subsistence under current conditions.

The intensification of core and peripheral production methods since the 1970s has not only seen declines in yield per hectare because of the short-term practices involved, it has also contributed to a speeding up in the decline of Africa's resource base. This is because the pasture, soil, livestock, water and forest which are being consumed, under prevailing conditions of high population growth coupled with ineffective and short-term management, are essentially non-renewable. In the absence of other value-creating activities, such as widespread industrialisation, it creates a situation prone to competition and conflict, from the local level through to national and regional levels.

3.7 Coping With Change

The question of how peripheral groups cope during times of hardship, especially the matter of enviro-economic stress, has attracted increasing attention over the past two or three years (de Waal, 1987; 1990; Swift, 1989). This is an important body of work, since not only does the operation of coping strategies partly define the specificity of African famine, but the research offers a valuable comment on the nature of semi-subsistence and, arguably, complements the focus of food security upon the operation of food systems.

Coping strategies are more complex than relations of market exchange. They denote a range of family-directed or group-directed activities which exploit a stock of assets, some of them of a subsistence nature, at times when food is scarce or expensive. Swift (1989) has divided assets into investments (including education and productive instruments), stores (including food and valuables), and claims (including debt and patronage). Some strategies involve the sale of assets, for example livestock or jewellery. Others exploit movement, for example labour migration to centres of employment, the temporary relocation of families to centres of food availability, the collection of wild foodstuffs, the collection of grass and wood for sale, and so on. The prevalence and operation of coping strategies mean that under enviro-economic famine conditions (i.e. in the absence of conflict), the social trajectory that a famine can take would be unclear to outsiders without an appreciation of the coping decisions involved. Variation in nutritional status by generation and gender, for example, would be a case in point. Due to the operation of this complex calculus, enviro-economic famine deaths are more likely to result from health crises, for example, due to insanitary overcrowding at food centres, rather than from frank starvation (de Waal, 1987).

Two things need to be emphasised about coping strategies in relation to understanding the impact of conflict. In the first place, coping strategies are not only normal, they are the most effective response that African populations can adopt at times of scarcity or expense. It has been estimated (de Waal, 1987) that during the mid-1980s famine in Western Sudan, farmers were able to grow only 35 per cent of their food requirement, while food aid provided only an additional 10 per cent. Apart from going hungry, the balance was met by the resourceful operation of coping strategies. In other words, coping strategies met around half the food requirement and, although the last 10 per cent was of vital importance for many people, the people's own strategies were five times more effective in dealing with the effects of famine than was food aid. There is no reason to believe that these orders of magnitude are not reflected in other enviro-economic famines.

The other major consideration is the crucial importance of market centres for the effective operation of coping strategies (Tigray, 1990). Without local markets (a frequent target in conflict situations) most of the exchange-based strategies cannot work (the sale of assets, petty trade, or casual labour, for example). In addition, a lack of markets suggests an absence of transport, which would reduce the effectiveness of labour migration. No transport means that even food available within the region cannot be traded. Little or no communication with other areas reduces the information upon which coping decisions can be based, and so on. Markets have an important and pervasive influence which cannot be underestimated. In their absence, coping strategies could well be reduced to living off stored food and the collection of wild foodstuffs, provided of course that these options existed. In other words, the effectiveness of coping strategies is greatly reduced.

While the study of coping strategies is important, it should not obscure the fact that the activities involved are either modifications or extensions of what are, essentially, the normal conditions of semi-subsistence (Tigray, October 1989). For example, the migration of families as opposed to men, or the involvement of men in petty trade alongside women, can be seen as stress induced modifications. It is worth making this point, lest readers mistakenly assume that coping strategies, effective as they can be, are immune from the instability that characterises semi-subsistence. Coping strategies are based upon assets, and in surviving famine, assets are consumed. There is a concern, for example, that in responding to the famine currently growing in Northern Sudan, peripheral rural groups have not made good their losses in livestock, movable wealth, and so on, since the last famine of the mid-1980s (Sudan, March 1990). In addition, due to intermittent drought, the availability of wild foodstuffs is also restricted. In other words, the trend is for assets to reduce. This process should be seen as part of the wider (shrinking) resource base. Indeed, although there are no figures available, the loss of peripheral group assets as a result of enviro-economic and conflict factors must be its major (if not its largest) component.

Due to the instability of semi-subsistence, coping strategies evolve and change over time. changing asset-base would suggest that different strategies may prevail in different ramines. This variability, however, is a reflection of the long-term crisis of subsidence in Africa.

4 LOCAL CONFLICT

Many studies of conflict in Africa have focused upon its national and international dimensions. During the Cold War and at the height of South African reaction, there was clearly a justification for this approach (Mozambique, 1986/87; 1987/88). With the recent change in international relations, however, a situation has been revealed in which, rather than declining as might have been expected, conflict continues. In the case of Angola and Mozambique, for example, the present situation is one in which it is now realised that little is known of the internal dynamics of these conflicts (Mozambique, 7/11/90). It is for these reasons, together with evidence that many internal wars use local conflict as a vehicle, that understanding local conflict is important for this report.

4.1 Conflict and Resources

A shrinking resource-base has immediate implications for semi-subsistence groups who depend upon those resources for their physical existence. Environmental and resource questions can provide a useful context in which to discuss the growth of conflict and insecurity. In fact, a good deal of recent academic work has been carried out in this field (see Ulrich, 1989). Although the depletion of resources can be said to be an underlying and pervasive influence in many of the local conflicts and internal wars current in Africa, at a local level there are two other factors to consider. In the first place, local and inter-state warfare has a long (pre-colonial) history in Africa. Secondly, although resource questions may underlie conflict, at a more immediate level violence is also a means through which groups express their self-identity and political aspirations. This political and cultural dimension of conflict is of vital importance if one is to understand the dynamics of modern African warfare and its devastating effects.

4.2 Wars of Subsistence

The previous chapter briefly touched upon some characteristics of subsistence economies (3.5 and 3.6), notably the relationship of reciprocity between producers and the environment. Relations of reciprocity were a widespread feature of subsistence societies. They not only linked people to nature, they linked people themselves in the form of diverse and complex exchange relations both within and between groups. However, just as subsistence societies were neither democratic or egalitarian, relations of reciprocity also encompassed conflict: warfare between both segmentary and state systems was a normal feature of social change and ecological adaptation in pre-colonial Africa.

The Lower Omo Valley in Southern Ethiopia, although populated by a number of relatively small agro-pastoralist groups, provides evidence that is relevant here. Until relatively recently, this area had been fairly isolated (Alvarsson, 1989). Under subsistence conditions warfare was bounded by rules. Raids, for example, should not be too frequent, the booty taken should not be excessive, and fatalities should be kept to a minimum (Almagor, 1979). In this fashion, periods of sporadic raiding or homicides, often lasting for several years or more, would separate major confrontations between groups. Such confrontations were also governed by rules of reciprocity and cultural observance. Who

should take part, what arms should be used and when, were important issues.³ There was, consequently, a lack of what could be called serious military strategy.

It is important to realise that from within a subsistence ethos, a pastoralist group, for example, is not interested in physically controlling territory. What is at stake is free access and use. Major confrontations therefore were more concerned with projecting an attacker's political rights. Before an attack, ceremonies would be held to confirm that right. Surprise was not employed: it would have served no political purpose. Loose, frontal attacks in broad daylight were common. If firearms were used, they were fired wildly at a distance with little or no attempt at aiming. In this manner, their effect was to frighten and cause confusion among the enemy. When used for killing, they were employed at close quarters, reflecting the operation of traditional weapons. No simultaneous attacks were launched, and no follow-up attacks upon weakened enemies were made. On the contrary, the attacking group would retreat and await a response, even if this may have been months or years in coming: they had made their political position in the area clear. For the group that had been attacked, its own political survival now depended upon being able to mount a retaliation of similar weight. If it were unable to do this, a compromise may have been possible, such as confronting a weaker ally of the attacking group. Once a response had been made, the way was then clear for the most important tasks to begin: ceremonies between the two groups to conclude a peace, redraw the boundaries separating them, and suitably adjust oral histories to reflect the new balance of political power.

Although this description pertains to segmentary societies, similar rules of reciprocity governed warfare involving state systems. Here, however, rather than a changing system of alliances, expansion through the incorporation of subordinate groups was often the intention. Reciprocity related to the fluid nature of ethnicity, allowing absorbed groups to change their identity to that of the dominant group.

Turton (1989) has analysed the recent history of the Mursi in Southern Ethiopia, a segmentary agro-pastoralist group, in the above terms and makes several key points of relevance to this report. Under subsistence conditions, conflict is a normal means of allowing groups to adjust to underlying economic and environmental change. It can only play this role, however, in so far as it is part of a balanced system of reciprocity. Finally, and most importantly, under subsistence conditions, there is no distinction between physical and political survival. The only way that individuals, families and groups can conceive of staying alive is through the survival of their way of life.

Central to this report is the position that conflict has a long history in Africa but, in recent times, this continuity has been broken by the collapse of reciprocity and the growth of imbalance: conflict, rather than being a means of adjustment, has become a widespread source of instability and a destroyer of traditional ways of life.

4.3 Breaking the Continuity

Tracing the point in the history of Africa when warfare changed from being a means of adaptation to being an agent of destruction would be a complex and lengthy task — indeed, a new area of study. All that can be attempted here is an outline for future research.

³ Firearms (Austrian carbines) did not appear in this area until the 1930s. It is only since the end of the 1970s that modern automatic weapons have been available in significant numbers.

Given that local conflict was common in pre-colonial Africa, colonialism, with varying degrees of success, attempted to police this situation. It did so by virtue of armed superiority and a monopoly of weapons. The decay of governance in many parts of Africa since the 1970s, and the spread of modern automatic weapons among peripheral groups, are important ingredients in the process of transformation. Other factors have been discussed in the previous chapter, concerning the increasing instability of semi-subsistence. This instability is synonymous with a general decline in reciprocity. Many peripheral groups, for example, have become increasingly dependent upon agriculture at a time when, due to climate and adverse market conditions, it has become a marginal activity. In such circumstances exchange relations between groups, including agriculturalists and pastoralists, begin to break down (Almond, 1989). A shrinking resource-base, reinforced by core economic and social programmes, further undermines reciprocity. Under conditions of stress, ethnic identities can tend to harden and, with the transformation of family relations, especially between generations, traditional lines of authority are also weakened. It is as if, under present conditions, the threat to the way of life of peripheral groups has never been greater, yet at the same time, both the external (governance) and internal (reciprocity) means of resolving the inevitable violence are at their lowest ebb.

In order to indicate the nature of the background of local conflict from which many major internal confrontations appear to be constructed, a useful example is the fate of pastoralist groups across the Sudano-Sahelian belt. The upswing in the commercialisation of agriculture during the 1970s, together with the effects of drought, prompted both the loss of assets and a territorial push into the farming areas to the south. This instigated many violent disputes between farmers and pastoralists over access to land and water (Earthsan, 1984). Similar strife has also crossed boundaries. During the same period, enviro-economic movements of pastoralist groups embroiled the Sudan/Kenya/Ethiopia/Somalia border areas in fierce grazing disputes. The most spectacular of these conflicts led to the clash between Ethiopia and Somalia over the Ogaden in 1977. Instability in the area has continued with, among other things, more clashes over grazing in Southern Ethiopia during the mid-1980s (El-Hinnawi, 1985).

Attempting to chart the recent development of local conflict in Africa is no easy task. One is not dealing with an unchanging reality. The dynamics of conflict are generated by the changing and unstable nature of semi-subsistence. Just as asset-based coping strategies change, so too do the ability and fortunes of different groups in relation to conflict. In attempting to select examples of this process, the problem faced is not the lack of possible material. It is the opposite: instances of local conflict in Africa are rife. There are also many examples of the 'peaceful' resolution of internal conflict which, nevertheless, never seem able to quell continuing local insecurity and periodic outbreaks of group conflict. What is remarkable is that not only has this situation received little serious attention but, except as a short-term difficulty, it is seldom regarded as having relevance for the formulation of policy.

5 INTERNAL CONFLICT

5.1 Connecting Local and Internal Conflict

The example of the war between Ethiopia and Somalia over the Ogaden, mentioned in Chapter 4, indicates how local conflict between semi-subsistence groups can become linked to wider national conflicts — in this case, between two sovereign states. More frequently, however, local conflict has been the vehicle through which internal or intra-state conflicts have been fought. Moreover, in most cases of inter-state wars, one side or the other has had links with internal forces in the opposing country. Examples of locally based internal conflict are legion. A few current ones include the enmity between Arab and Dinka people in Sudan; the Krahn, Mano and Gio configuration in Liberia (Africa Watch, 26/10/1990); the Isaac, Hawiya and Ogadeni confrontation in Somalia; the relationship between the MNR opposition and central Shona speakers in Mozambique (Hall, nd); in Angola, the association between UNITA and the Ovimbundu (Africa Watch, 1989); and so on. Other present and past internal conflicts, in Nigeria, Chad, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, and so forth, are similarly identified and structured. The strong association between local and internal conflicts is a normal and defining characteristic of modern warfare in Africa. In the past, commentators have tended to shy away from this fact, feeling awkward and embarrassed by the spectre of 'tribalism'. In so doing, not only has conflict not been accorded the policy relevance it clearly has, but its powerful significance in relation to the current instability of semi-subsistence has been neglected.

Clearly, the link between local and internal conflict is not a direct one. Political mediation is a crucial and complex element which pertains not only to how groups are linked to the state, but also to how they are subsumed and organised by political factions or rebel groups. In discussing the break between traditional African warfare and conditions today, the idea of an increasing imbalance and loss of reciprocity has been introduced. So far, this has been discussed only in relation to economic and environmental factors. By far the greatest source of imbalance, however, is that leap which occurs once local conflicts become politically integrated into wider internal wars. This scenario can be seen as beginning with struggle against colonialism and having continued ever since.

Political imbalance exists at two levels. In the first place, and often building upon colonial patterns, the material benefits resulting from the resolution of internal conflicts, such as roads, hospitals and education, have frequently been disproportionately channelled to those groups allied to the victorious party. Regional imbalances between core and peripheral groups have been maintained or created in terms of access to such fruits of development. Africa's shrinking resource-base has intensified these divisions.

Maintaining or extending such disparities, together with attempts to redress or resist this process by subordinate groups, has, more recently, become the source of the other major aspect of political imbalance: access to modern automatic weapons. Internal conflict has led African governments to spend staggering amounts of precious hard currency on armaments. In the case of Sudan, which is by no means untypical, 40 per cent of

government expenditure is currently spent on arms. Such expenditure in otherwise poor countries has meant that many governments, and opposing groups, have entered into concessionary relations with superpowers and neighbouring states in order to secure arms supplies. Local conflicts have become linked to internal wars which, in turn, are the chess pieces of international rivalry. Once weapons reach the local context, the ferocious killing power that modern arms embody is more than sufficient to overwhelm any remaining semblance of balance or reciprocity that may exist. It is in this context that internal war in Africa has become synonymous with gross violations of human rights and deliberate attempts to destroy the assets and way of life of opposing groups.

5.2 Limitations of Conventional Understanding

Most internal wars in Africa are not fought in a conventional manner, with pitched battles between prepared soldiers in which the safety of civilians is sacrosanct. Not only are methods different: even the terminology of conventional warfare (for example, the notions of 'civilian' or 'soldier'), when used in an ethnically structured context, become problematic and even meaningless. A key difference between the conventional and the ethnically defined situations concerns the attitude of what could be called the 'combatants', including their political leaders, toward 'non-combatant' populations. Variations within this attitude indicate an important continuum, or even break, within Africa.

Besides the destruction and mayhem that war creates, it must be stressed that it can also be the occasion of fundamental social change, including advances in the emancipation of marginal groups. From this perspective, there appear to be two extremes. At one end stand Eritrea and Tigray where, as numerous reports attest (for example, Tigray, 7/1 to 7/3/87; Emergencies Unit, March 1990), the non-combatant population not only fully supports the combatants, but the combatants view the active and free cooperation of non-combatants as vital for the war effort. This inter-dependence, moreover, has provided the impetus for noted organisation and institution building in which, among other things, the emancipation of women is said to have made great and lasting progress. In comparison, combatants in other arenas of conflict (including those on the Ethiopian side of the Eritrea/Tigray war) frequently view non-combatant populations in a more mercenary light: as a means to subsistence and/or conscription which have to be controlled or, if they happen to be in areas contested by opposing combatants, prevented from providing them with similar services. Although some parties to conflict in Africa frequently use the rhetoric of national liberation, their practice on the ground often challenges the conventional wisdom that in order to operate, a guerrilla movement needs the support of local people. An extreme case is represented by the MNR in Mozambique where, it would appear, the sole reciprocity between it and the non-combatants under MNR control is a precarious possibility of their remaining alive (Gersony, 1988).

The reasons for the difference between the situation in Eritrea/Tigray and other areas under conflict are beyond the scope of this report. The prevalence of the more mercenary attitude, however, must be sought in the politico-ideological inability to separate physical from political survival within a semi-subsistence ethos. If the survival of people as political beings depends upon the survival of their way of life, it then follows, quite logically but tragically, that if you wish to cow them politically, you must destroy or incapacitate their way of life. This logic hardens further if, due to declining resources, such dominance is necessary for the survival of the ethnic group concerned. The various and complex patterns of semi-subsistence, together with their related coping strategies, are both the front-line targets and defensive strongholds of internal conflict in Africa: there could be no other.

5.3 War as Political Economy

Besides standing armies which, although originating in an earlier era, now usually conform to the logic of internal warfare, the main institutional form which modern conflict assumes has recently been examined in terms of 'war-lordism'. Briefly, the concept defines a situation of de-institutionalisation, central government decay, and the growth of regionalism. Within this context, reflecting the situation in China during the 1920s, a strong politico-military leadership is asserted over a locality or region, and by drawing upon the resources of this area, an attempt is made to expand its sphere of influence. The war-lord concept has been argued to have relevance in understanding, for example, the internal collapse of Chad (Charlton and May, 1989). Somalia may also be instructive in this respect. To attempt to apply an over-rigid, Chinese-based definition of war-lord in the context of Africa, however, may miss a vital point. The idea of local, ethnically structured groups assuming a politico-military role in a period of decay in central governance and a shrinking resource base does have a utility. Moreover, expressed in more general terms, it allows for regional and country variations. There would appear to be two main forms of the war-lord structure: the 'group' and the 'movement'.

Under the rubric of the local politico-military group one could include the government-backed militia in Sudan, the various splinter movements in Northern Uganda (Uganda, 7/88 to 4/89) and, of interest because of its urban location, Inkatha in South Africa (International Commission of Jurists, 24/10/90). With regard to politico-military movements, while one ethnic group may dominate the leadership, the body of the organisation is composed of subsumed groups upon which the movement relies for its subsistence and conscripts. Compared to the local politico-military group, such movements control larger areas and may have national (as opposed to regional) political aspirations. There does, however, appear to be a connection between the two, since many movements have grown by a process of conquest and incorporation of local groups. The SPLA in South Sudan, the MNR in Mozambique, and UNITA in Angola, for example, can all be seen as variants of this type.

The emergence of politico-military groups, their development, and (in some places) amalgamation into movements is fought out on a terrain of semi-subsistence economies. One cannot therefore underestimate or emphasise enough the enormous price in dislocation and human suffering that this implies. Groups and movements not only require conscripts to fight; they need porters to carry weapons, supplies and booty; sappers to clear mines; informants to disclose enemy positions; and, crucially, a ready access to food and sustenance. How such goods and services are secured in the field is not something simply for quartermasters to worry about; on the contrary, it is the central dynamic of internal warfare. To appreciate this fact, one has to develop an appreciation of the political economy of violence. The idea of food as a weapon in internal conflict has become popular in recent years. What is less frequently recognised, however, is that food and sustenance are also a necessary goal of conflict.

The political economy of groups: the Baggara in West Sudan

Before the drought of the mid-1980s, the various Baggara Arab pastoralist groups living on the western borders between North and South Sudan had already felt the effects of marginalisation (see 3.5). The loss of stock during the drought served to compound these difficulties. The Baggara are the northern neighbours of Dinka pastoralist groups living in South Sudan. Due to their geographical position, Dinka cattle had been relatively protected from the effects of the drought. There had been periodic raiding between Baggara and Dinka for generations, but such conflict had been kept within limits by a

wider system of reciprocity which linked the two (Howell, 1951). The present civil war began in 1983 with the formation of the SPLA in South Sudan. Its leadership is based upon the Dinka who, in any case, are the largest ethno-linguistic grouping in the South. The combination of a local material imbalance among the Baggara and the government's need to prosecute the war was to produce catastrophic results for the border Dinka.

In 1985, the Northern government began to arm the Baggara pastoralists with modern weaponry and encourage attacks upon the unarmed Dinka to the south. The attacks were led by a younger generation of political leaders who had emerged during the process of social transformation.⁴ An orgy of violence spread south of the border (Africa Watch, March 1990). Armed militia, sometimes several hundred strong, roamed the countryside looting, killing, raping, and enslaving. Thousands of people were killed and maimed, tens of thousands of cattle stolen and, by 1988, hundreds of thousands of Dinka had been displaced, leaving the region virtually depopulated. The move from conflict as a means of adaptation to conflict as an agent of destruction is starkly illustrated. These events were out of all proportion to local conflicts of the past. Terrible as this example is, similar events have all too frequently come to characterise internal conflict in Africa.

The political economy of movements: the SPLA in South Sudan

In South Sudan the SPLA has consolidated its presence in areas not previously under its influence, in a roughly three-stage process. The first stage involved the formation of tactical alliances with local groups and, where necessary, the military defeat of government-sponsored militia. The fate of the Murle and Mundari militia is an example of the latter. The disturbed nature of the Sudan/Ethiopia/Kenya/Uganda border areas has already been referred to (see 4.3). During the mid-1980s, in order to secure a safe base and access to food, the SPLA strategy in South West Ethiopia was to play on the differences and traditional hostility between the two linguistically related branches of the Nilo-Saharans: the Chai and Mursi on one side, and the Nyangatom, Toposa and Turkana on the other (Alvarson, 1989). The selective arming of these groups by the SPLA not only helped to form alliances, but the increased scale and ferocity of attacks upon their relatively unarmed rivals provided, in the form of looted grain and cattle, a vital means of subsistence. In 1987, for example, the SPLA's arming of the Nyangatom allowed it to mount a devastating attack upon the Mursi (Turton, 1989). In this attack between 500 and 1,000 Mursi (10-20 per cent of the entire population) were killed. As in the Baggara/Dinka example, killing on this scale destroys the traditional system of checks and balances between groups.

As the SPLA has extended its influence in the Sudan/Kenya/Uganda border areas, a similar strategy of playing on group enmities, selective arming, and the formation of complex patterns of local alliance has been adopted. One consequence has been the widespread displacement of the losing populations throughout the area. In 1986, for example, in order to secure a base and provisions in South Sudan near the Uganda border, the SPLA made use of the long-standing hostility between the Acholi and the Madi (Allen, 1989). The Madi had been associated with the Amin regime, and following its collapse, Madi refugees were settled in international camps across the border in Sudanese Acholi territory. These camps were attacked and looted by local Acholi and SPLA, causing thousands of Madi to stream back into Uganda, and producing one more in a succession of population displacements.

⁴ The marginalisation of traditional leadership has also been noted among the Karamajong raiders in Northern Uganda (Uganda, 7/88-4/89).

Evolving from this process of alliance and defeat, the second stage of consolidation has involved attempting to cement the emerging structure by local conscription and the training of recruits in the SPLA's Ethiopian base camps. Using this local cadre, the final stage of consolidation, which corresponds to the present, involves establishing a systematic structure of internal taxation. The advent of the UN's Operation Lifeline Sudan, in so far as significant amounts of relief food and seed have been appropriated by the SPLA (Sudan, September 1990), can be argued to have reduced tension in some areas by relieving SPLA pressure on non-combatant populations. In other words, the misappropriation of relief supplies has, ironically, made it easier for them to cope.

The SPLA has significantly transformed the socio-political system over large areas of South Sudan. It has done so, however, by increasing the imbalances within that system through the selective strengthening of some groups at the expense of others. In some cases, ethnic groups, in the sense of distinct socio-economic units, have ceased to exist. Just as the use of government-backed militia along the North/South border has driven ethnic differences to new depths, the SPLA alliance is unstable and fractious.

The political economy of movements: the MNR in Mozambique

In the past, the MNR has been regarded solely as a South African construction. It is only recently that attention has been directed to its internal characteristics and dynamism. Its leadership is dominated by Shona speakers from central Mozambique, and evidence exists to suggest that in certain areas it may enjoy a degree of local support resulting from the disruptions to daily life caused by the planned economy (Hall, nd). The relationship between the MNR and the non-combatant populations more generally, however, is extremely harsh and revolves around the forced extraction of food, labour and recruits. In some respects, the MNR is interesting by virtue of its abhorrent excesses. It clearly exposes the conventional idea that a successful guerrilla movement can survive only if it has the widespread support of the people. The MNR demonstrates that the instrumental use of violence and exemplary terror is a viable alternative. This has meant that the MNR has not needed to develop a defined political programme. Nor does it make any effort to communicate to non-combatants in the areas under MNR control the reasons why it is fighting. The political economy of violence is sufficient in itself.

Using the testimonies of refugee non-combatants formerly living in MNR areas, Gersony (1988) has given a good account of the political economy the MNR. In terms of territory, he describes three distinct areas: (a) tax areas, (b) control areas, and (c) destruction areas. Tax areas are regions of dispersed settlements which the MNR loosely controls. Within these areas food is taken from non-combatants on demand. Non-combatants are also used for short-term portage duties, and women are expected to provide combatants with sex upon demand. Beatings and exemplary mutilation are common.

In control areas the population roughly divides into indigenous groups and captives. The conditions here, especially for the latter, are much harsher than in tax areas. Captives are used for a variety of purposes. They cultivate the MNR farms, usually on a full-time basis, and do not benefit from this labour. They are expected to feed themselves through the cultivation of their own plots in what little free time they may have. Women are expected to transfer from the fields to the MNR camps on demand for sex. Portage duties are harsh, often involving long distances with little or no food. Murder and mutilation are frequently used to instil cooperation. The perimeters of control areas are policed, and this, together with exemplary punishments and executions, deters escape.

Destruction areas include a variety of targets. Villages set up by the government to house returning refugees have frequently been selected in the past. Some entire geographical areas have also been so designated. In other cases it has been the largest villages in a given location. In the last analysis, the aim has been to destroy the population centres in these areas. This process usually takes place in three stages. The first involves reconnaissance of the area and the collection of intelligence regarding the disposition of government troops, the homes of officials, teachers, and so. Depending upon the location, a political visit may then take place. Sometimes the villagers may be advised to disperse to their fields, and the locality becomes a tax area. The final stage is the attack and the devastation of the village and any infrastructure or installations that are present. The destruction is systematic and total. Non-combatants are killed indiscriminately. In cases where small children have been mistakenly left behind by fleeing parents, they are often subject to retributive mutilation. Other non-combatants are rounded up and taken to control areas to act either as captive labour or forced recruits. Forced recruitment is the usual method of conscription. Recruits are taken to control areas outside their own locality. It would appear that initially they are heavily guarded and fearful of the consequences of attempted escape. Violence itself, however, appears to be a little understood rite of passage. Some commentators have noted that once new conscripts have completed their first raid, the surveillance surrounding them decreases and they are integrated into the main body.⁵

Destruction areas can be seen as vital to the MNR in two ways. Firstly, they are a source of replenishment, especially of labour and recruits. Secondly, given the association between physical and political survival, MNR destruction can also be seen as the main political expression of its existence. Its thoroughness in this respect, together with its widespread and systematic employment of mutilation and exemplary terror, reduces its need for a conventional political programme. Its acts speak volumes. Moreover, the fact that it can target whole areas for destruction, with little prospect of effective government protection or retaliation, exposes the political weakness of the centre.

The logic of food denial

Because both groups and movements need to secure or protect sources of food and sustenance in order to survive physically and politically, a counter-logic demands that those sources are themselves legitimate targets for the opposition. This is the classic field of counter-insurgency operations. There are two main forms of food denial. One of them rests upon the relocation or corralling of groups to prevent them from providing sustenance to opposing bodies. Government forces in Ethiopia, Uganda, Angola, and Mozambique, for example, have used these techniques. Such operations have not been noted for their sensitivity or observance of human rights. The other form of food denial is the actual withholding of food supplies to a given area or group. There are many examples of this in Africa. It is usually encountered in cases where an area or group deemed to belong to the enemy is already suffering the effects of war and/or environmental stress. The attempts to prevent relief supplies from reaching South Sudan or Eritrea/Tigray by the Sudanese and Ethiopian governments respectively are examples. Movements, however, also attempt to interdict food supplies. The SPLA's attempt to blockade the government towns in South Sudan is a case in point.

⁵ UNITA in Angola has a similar political economy, but appears less extreme in some respects (Africa Watch, April 1989).

6 WAR AND FAMINE

6.1 Structural Considerations

On the structural or underlying connection between war and famine, several observations can be made. In some respects, internal war in Africa is still partly cast in an earlier mould. That is, it is fought through groups whose existence is based upon different forms of semi-subsistence. Modern conflict, however, arises not as a process of regulation and adaptation, but from the growing instability and crisis of semi-subsistence. This instability has increased since the 1970s. Modern warfare, moreover, proceeds not by resolving tensions but by massively increasing disparities between groups. It does so because the political economy of internal war dictates that systems of semi-subsistence are both targets and points of defence. The polarisation of ethnic groups and the destruction of assets reinforce the instability of semi-subsistence. Conflict in Africa should not be seen as a secondary or separate issue. It is a long-term trend and a defining characteristic in the growth of food insecurity. It is comparable to the negative aspects of economic and environmental change already discussed (3.4 to 3.6). Indeed conflict, impoverishment, and drought appear to have become central aspects of a complex, antagonistic, and mutually reinforcing syndrome which has pushed many countries towards widespread food insecurity and political disintegration. In other words, enviro-economic factors are the sub-structure of African famine, while conflict is its super-structure.

6.2 The Overall Effect of War

This report has already examined the central importance of coping strategies in attempting to survive enviro-economic famines (3.7). In his useful contribution to defining the specificity of African famine, de Waal (1990) has noted not only the role of coping strategies, but also the prevalence of conflict. The effect of conflict, both indirectly and as a deliberate strategy, has been to restrict or destroy people's means of subsistence and ability to cope. Under conflict conditions, people's vulnerability increases dramatically. If drought is also present, it compounds the vulnerability equation. If one then adds military strategies which actively promote, or in some cases prevent, population movement, or deny the availability of or access to relief food, then frank starvation is often the result, rather than the health crises of enviro-economic famines. Some recent examples of starvation under conflict conditions include Karamoja in Northern Uganda (1980), the worst areas of Northern Ethiopia (1984), Ethiopian resettlement camps (mid-1980s), and displaced Dinka in West Sudan (1988).

The consequences of war relate to the deliberate strategy of selectively destabilising and incapacitating rural groups. These actions are frequently employed by both sides in an internal conflict, although variations in the degree of application are common. In Uganda, Angola, and Mozambique, for example, the government forces, although employing similar tactics on occasion, are generally regarded as more restrained than the groups and movements confronting them. In Liberia, on the other hand, all parties to the conflict are involved in the systematic abuse of human rights (Africa Watch, 26/10/90). The main exceptions, as already mentioned, are Eritrea and Tigray.

6.3 Some Basic Parameters

The manner in which conflict increases vulnerability and food insecurity is varied and complex. It is difficult to separate the indirect from the direct consequences of war in this respect, since the deliberate act of destroying economic systems and infrastructure, together with the uprooting of entire populations, has long-term effects and multiple ramifications, besides immediate consequences. Deciding where to place a dividing line is difficult and even misleading.

The destruction and dislocation of markets

The destruction of market centres and transport links is a high priority in internal conflict. The Ethiopian government has frequently used aerial bombardment to disrupt the economies of Eritrea and Tigray. In Angola and Mozambique rebel attacks, exemplary terror, and the indiscriminate mining of roads have been used to similar effects. The consequences of such disruption are legion. In Eritrea and Tigray market activities, like agriculture, have to take place at night. In South Sudan, Angola and Mozambique a barter economy has emerged from the disintegration of the formal rural economy. The destruction of markets greatly increases food insecurity in such areas.

Areas of conflict also disrupt the commercial and labour markets adjoining them. People are disinclined to travel, and merchants stay away. Trading and labour migration are important aspects of people's coping strategies. If the insecurity is long-term, then the loss of income-earning opportunities changes the socio-economics of an entire area. This in turn can have numerous knock-on effects. In the case of Northern Uganda, for example, it has been argued that 15 years of war have created the socio-economic conditions that favour the spread of AIDS. The decline of local markets means that most men are unable to earn enough money to pay the extremely high bride-wealth now demanded. The result is growing numbers of informal marital arrangements, which frequently break down. In addition, the impoverishment of families with AIDS sufferers, through their declining ability to cultivate, has forced more and more women into brewing and prostitution (Uganda, 5/89-5/90).

The destruction and dislocation of subsistence agriculture

Attempts to discourage or prevent opposing groups from cultivating are common. The Ethiopian government has destroyed crops and herds in Eritrea and Tigray. Cultivation now takes place at night. In Angola, UNITA has indiscriminately mined wide areas of countryside. For this reason, Angola has the highest incidence of mine-inflicted injuries in the world. It is also food-insecure, and yet is potentially a rich and fertile country. In Mozambique random attacks and exemplary terror by the MNR discourage cultivation. In South Sudan, government soldiers have attempted to restrict cultivation in some regions to areas surrounding government-held towns. Several examples have been cited of the systematic looting and destruction of peasant/pastoralist assets. Even in areas where insecurity may be less intense, farms are reluctant to cultivate at any distance from their villages. In Western Sudan, peasants have sold camels, a valuable transport animal, for fear of attracting raiding parties. War and conflict depress the level of subsistence agriculture, and reduce the asset-base in rural areas. Combined with the destruction and dislocation of markets, vulnerability and food insecurity are greatly increased.

The dislocation of populations

The effect of war has been to create a massive problem of refugees and internally displaced people. In Mozambique, there are over four million internally displaced people, with a further 1.2 million living as refugees in surrounding countries. Angola has 1.5

million displaced within its own borders and 0.6 million refugees outside. In South Sudan, more than one million people have been displaced internally and to North Sudan, while a similar number are living in neighbouring countries. Within a few months of the outbreak of the recent fighting in Liberia, almost half of the country's total population of 1.5 million had been displaced, a quarter of these as refugees in West Africa. These examples serve to show that the most visible consequence of internal conflict is the massive displacement of people. Such populations are extremely vulnerable, due to the loss of their livelihoods and assets. They are also vulnerable to food denial and human rights abuse. The mandate of the UNHCR does not cover the internally displaced. Even with regard to certified refugees, however, the financial crisis currently facing the UNHCR means that it is not always able to discharge its mandate effectively. The displaced and refugee populations face further economic and social marginalisation through lost opportunities for employment and education — factors which are recognised as increasing their food insecurity.

The effects on the family

Internal war in Africa has had a devastating impact upon family, generational and gender relations in Africa. Besides the dividing and bereavement of families, war has magnified and greatly accentuated trends already discernible as a result of enviro-economic factors. The case of Uganda mentioned above indicates how war can lead to new and unstable marital relations. The extreme, but all too common, occurrence is the widespread rape and abuse of women in conflict situations. The burdens and exposure of women, already increasing, are greatly magnified by war. Generational changes are also accentuated. The 'child soldiers' of Liberia, Uganda, Mozambique, and Angola are another example of the extremes to which internal conflict is pushing African family and social relations. The reappearance of slavery in Sudan and Mozambique is also relevant here. The immensely traumatic effect of these events does not appear to have attracted widespread attention.

The destruction and dislocation of social infrastructure

The destruction of schools, or the unwillingness of teachers to work in insecure areas, mean the loss of education for children on a massive scale. Education is an important strategy by which families attempt to escape poverty. In Sudan, Uganda, Mozambique, and Angola entire generations of children have reached adulthood with little or no formal education. For many, violence may be the only future waiting for them.

Insecurity disrupts health services and reduces already low levels of care at a time when growing vulnerability increases the risk of health crises. In some countries diseases such as malaria, for example, once believed to be under control, have re-established themselves in many areas. Conflict and insecurity have curtailed veterinary and pest control services. Because the threat of locusts, for example, crosses borders and battle lines, their control in the Horn has been significantly weakened. In South Sudan, the collapse of veterinary services has greatly added to the loss of cattle in the region. Such services were never comprehensive, but their disruption certainly contributes to pastoralists' vulnerability.

Contribution to economic decline

The overall effect of the destruction of infrastructure, the loss of production, the multiple disruptions and the diversion of scarce resources towards the purchase of arms has had a major and incalculable economic impact on many African countries (Green, 1987). Outside perceptions of insecurity and conflict have also been an important factor in the collapse of foreign direct investment since the 1970s. Internal warfare must now be regarded as an important factor promoting long-term economic decline.

7 THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF PUBLIC WELFARE

Enviro-economic and political factors combined to promote a major growth of international welfare activity in Africa during the 1980s. The policy issues of the 1990s will evolve around adapting and changing the systems of international welfare that have emerged.

7.1 The Conventions of War

This report has sought to demonstrate that internal war in Africa is a long-term problem which needs urgent and serious consideration. There are two immediate factors here. Firstly, internal conflict is organically linked to the instability of semi-subsistence. This means that even if national peace treaties are concluded, so long as local instability is not tackled, insecurity will continue to rear its head. The recent decline of external support for internal conflicts has indicated the resilience of local factors in warfare. Secondly, the way internal conflicts are fought systematically violates the international conventions on the conduct of war, particularly those dealing with the treatment of civilian populations.⁶

The issue of the violation of the rules of war is a useful starting point for discussing the international response to internal conflict in Africa. The International Commission of the Red Cross (ICRC) should, in many respects, be the ideal agency to intervene in order to protect civilian populations. The ICRC, however, has faced many difficulties in Africa. Not only is it common for conflicting parties not to recognise one or all of the various conventions, but the conventions themselves were primarily framed to govern inter-state war between industrialised nations. Indeed, one could see them as a form of reciprocity which attempts to direct and limit the effects of such wars. Non-international or internal war is therefore something of an anomaly within international law, and many aspects of the relevant Articles and Protocols have a customary rather than a definitive status. One result of these difficulties has been that, at best, the ICRC has been ineffective in Africa.

Approaches to this problem are perhaps symptomatic of a wider policy orientation towards internal conflict. Two main responses seem possible. One would be to regard war in Africa as beyond the pale, as something to which normal conventions do not apply and which is best left alone. In other words, disengagement. This attitude would not be so far from the intentional or unintentional effects of the tactical support provided by the South African police to Inkatha: of allowing the outside world to develop a 'black on black' view of violence. The other response is to recognise that internal conflict has become a long-term problem and, precisely because current conventions were not framed to deal with this eventuality, they therefore require urgent and thorough reform. In other words, it is not so much that internal war is at fault (it has a political economy and logic), but the

⁶ Notably, Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions (the rules of war governing non-international armed conflict), Protocol II of the Geneva Accords, and the Land Mines Protocol.

conventions, institutions, and strategies with which it is approached. This position is in my view the only defensible one.

7.2 The Internationalisation of Public Welfare

Chapter 2 introduced the idea of an emerging new world order in which Africa's disadvantaged position has been structurally reinforced. Africa's economic decline and growing food insecurity since the 1970s have been matched by a growth in welfare aid directed to the continent. Since the 1970s, for example, multilateral aid to Africa has steadily grown, at the same time as it has fallen off in other areas of the world. In 1987, Sub-Saharan Africa received 36 per cent (\$12.6 bn) of the world total, this being the largest single regional allocation. The case of British bilateral aid is instructive. At the same time as British foreign direct investment has collapsed in Africa, bilateral aid has increased. It grew from 28 per cent of the total in 1971 to 48 per cent in 1988 (ODA, 1989). Again, this has been at the expense of British aid flows to other areas of the world. This pattern is also reflected in Oxfam expenditure. There is a symmetry between the decline in economic performance/foreign investment and the increase in foreign aid. It would seem that Africa has been re-integrated into the new world order, not by decisive economic ties but by the internationalisation of public welfare.

This internationalisation is based upon the projection of a two-tier welfare system that has emerged in connection with the neo-liberal restructuring of the welfare state in the West (2.1). In the case of Africa, structural adjustment is attempting to stimulate market reform, while a welfare safety net is increasingly being provided in the form of contractual or project agreements linking donors and NGOs. Current approaches to food security, for example, fall into this two-tier pattern (Maxwell et al., 1990; IGADD, 1990). One can discern the beginnings of a loose meshing of approaches and institutions. Although government bodies are frequently involved in existing safety-net agreements, it is an essentially donor/NGO system, since this is the main finance/implementation axis.⁷ While there are exceptions, in most contracts government bodies play the role of a 'sleeping partner'. Given that donor/NGO systems have emerged in response to the incapacity of government structures, it would be surprising to find otherwise.

The internationalisation of public welfare, especially its donor/NGO safety net, grew considerably during the 1980s. It received a major impetus from the growing environmental and increasingly war-related emergencies of the period. Large bilateral/NGO operations have developed in Sudan and Ethiopia since the mid-1980s. Bilateral/NGO systems have also grown in Uganda and Mozambique. A new departure, beginning in 1989, was the emergence of a UN/NGO operation in South Sudan. A similar structure is now being developed in Angola. Many multilateral, bilateral, and NGO organisations now have their largest operations in Africa. With increasing experience, wider national and international linkages are developing. Oxfam's own administrative response (1.2) is symptomatic of this trend. A two-tier welfare system has begun to take shape in Africa and is entering a period of consolidation and integration.

These historic developments are of global importance. If one takes an objective view of the trends, then several conclusions appear inevitable. Long-term political instability and

⁷ Since the 1970s, the amount of bilateral aid given to NGOs has increased at the same time as the implementing capacity of many African governments has declined. Between 1975 and 1988, for example, the British government increased its support for NGOs from £5 million to £42 million (ODA, 1989).

internal conflict are compounding problems of economic decline, government decay, and food insecurity. The internationalisation of public welfare has been the inevitable outcome of this set of circumstances. Trends suggest that these two factors are not only linked, but that they will continue to grow and develop during the 1990s.

This development carries several important implications. In the first place, the relief/development debate, which may have been relevant in the 1960s and 1970s, has now become meaningless. The effect of the crisis is such that agency activity has increasingly taken on the appearance of basic public welfare interventions either of a direct, relief type or an indirect, self-help variety. Two-tier welfare is also the administrative expression of the polarised society, one part of which exists in a state of perpetual crisis. In the 'global cities' of the leading industrial countries, this takes the form of a growing underclass of dispossessed and criminalised marginals (Sassen-Koob, 1989). In Africa, the long-term instability of semi-subsistence gives rise to conflict, which further increases instability. The 'underclass' here are the casualties of war and enviro-economic crisis. The existence of 'developmentalism' within NGOs, especially the view that relief work is somehow undesirable, tends to work against a proper appreciation of the full significance and historic weight of present trends. It therefore minimises the urgent need to reform the system that is now developing.

7.3 The Case For Reform

The main policy debate during the 1990s will centre on the issue of whether or not a two-tier welfare system of the type currently emerging is adequate or appropriate to deal with the specificity of African famine. A brief examination of the conventional rules of war, for example, has indicated a major area of concern in this respect.

Oxfam has rightly prided itself on developing a direct relationship with project partners and beneficiaries. During the 1990s, it is possible that due to the combined effects of enviro-economic and conflict factors, together with the decay and disintegration of governance, difficulties over access to the victims of war or famine, and limitations on the ability to help will increase. In such a situation increasing attention must be given to the institutional framework as a whole. The case for the reform of the donor/NGO system rests on two factors: (a) it is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, the only effective means of assisting people in dire distress (the case of Northern Sudan is instructive here); and (b) it is fraught with problems, limitations, and gross inadequacies.

The question of targeting

In a two-tier welfare system, safety nets are based upon targeting assistance. The conventional wisdom in Africa is that targeting is the only way to reduce the unsustainable cost of generalised nutritional subsidies. Moreover, that the savings achieved by limiting such subsidies more than compensate for the relatively high administrative costs that a targeting system represents (World Bank, 1986). The neo-liberal logic within this position propels targeting systems towards minimalist levels of input. This can stand in contrast to agency concerns for the needs of community and gender. In Sudan and Uganda, Oxfam has attempted to develop relief-targeting systems that are reliant in some way upon communal forms of re-distribution, or to support the semi-subsistence economy involved. This is important work, but it does not appear to have been fully evaluated, or if it has, it has not been carried out in relation to the projects' primary objectives (Uganda, 5/89-5/90). It is ironic, for example, that when outside interest in targeting systems is growing, Oxfam's experience in Red Sea Province, Sudan,

which is arguably one of the most systematic attempts at targeting yet attempted in Africa, appears to be practically unknown outside the organisation.

In the case of enviro-economic stress, where coping strategies and transformations in family and gender relations create a complex situation, sensitive targeting is difficult. In conflict situations these difficulties are magnified even further. It must be clearly stated that the logic of internal war means that no one can be neutral. This raises many issues, including that of compensatory aid in conflict situations. Actions are seen as helping either one side or the other. In West Sudan during 1988, in an emergency operation generally regarded as successful, it was possible to relocate and support displaced Dinka, in a potentially hostile Arab region, only by offering compensatory aid (water, health and educational inputs) for the indigenous population. This approach is also common, usually due to political pressure, when dealing with refugees.

The case of Oxfam's involvement in 1988 with the war-affected population of Kitgum, Northern Uganda is also instructive (Uganda, 7/88-4/89). It is held that the comprehensive and generous distribution of food, seeds, and tools, in amounts which other agencies felt were not justified on a strict definition of need, was instrumental in securing relative peace in the District. The rationale was that a generous (as opposed to a strictly targeted) distribution would not further exacerbate differences in a ravaged community. Moreover it was based upon the recognition of the trauma of war. War-affected populations are bereaved populations. Food aid in Kitgum allowed people to bury their dead and mourn their loss through the wakes demanded by custom. Situations of conflict demand more than minimalist conceptions of targeting. With regard to trauma, moreover, a new range of non-material inputs needs to be developed.

Even in relation to enviro-economic stress, targeting is regarded as still being in its infancy (Maxwell et al., 1990). In relation to conflict, which accounts for possibly half of the food insecurity in Africa, the surface has hardly been scratched. The political issue of equity quickly arises in cases of displacement or destruction of resources. It may not be possible or even desirable to ignore pressure for compensatory aid. For a variety of social as well as physical reasons, war-affected populations may require far greater inputs than conventional targeting would allow for. The psychological and traumatic effect of war is also important. If physical survival cannot be separated from the survival of the group, then many displaced people whose way of life has been destroyed have lost everything, including their psychological and cultural foundations. This is an element of targeting which is rarely even thought about, and so practical action is even more rarely undertaken. In all these cases, neo-liberal minimalist conceptions are open to challenge.

The political economy of violence which governs internal conflict (such as the tax systems of combatants, strategies of food denial, and so on) highlights even more issues. As we have seen, the appropriation of food aid by the SPLA in South Sudan may have eased the tax burden on non-combatants, thereby increasing their ability to cope. While no one could seriously argue (or could they?) that the best way to help non-combatants in an internal conflict is to feed combatants, it illustrates the complexity of these problems. It also indicates that, targeting aside, the main difficulty in a conflict situation is that of access to the victims.

The question of access

Apart from logistical and technical considerations, problems of access are compounded by two problems: (a) the political economy of internal conflict; and (b) the unilateral nature

of the donor/NGO system. With regard to the latter, while there can be a constructive dynamic between neo-liberalism and neo-populism, certain aspects of the relation must be made clear. The transfer of funds away from governments and towards NGOs, which is a defining feature of the donor/NGO system, has probably never been discussed by donors with any African government. Nor, for that matter, does it appear ever to have been discussed seriously with NGOs. It has emerged as a condition imposed by donors, all too often founded on ill-defined and assumed roles.

The unilateral (yet ill-defined) donor/NGO system exists in a relation of contradiction and even antagonism to African governments. Many are uneasy with the new-found wealth of NGOs and their populist leanings. This is a serious weakness in the international system of public welfare, and it undermines attempts to construct a welfare safety net in numerous ways, ranging from indifference to outright hostility and obstruction. In the case of Sudan, beginning with government attempts in 1986 to deny food to the South, there has been a steadily worsening relationship between government and donor/NGOs. Until recently, a similar situation existed in Ethiopia. While in Uganda and Mozambique relations can be said to have begun cordially, problems are now beginning to arise. If the trend continues, in two or three years' time, the situation in these countries could well resemble the virtual paralysis that now exists in Sudan. These problems are a structural feature of the donor/NGO system, especially in conflict or conflict-related situations.

In trying to play a humanitarian role, the donor/NGO system has to confront the logic of internal conflict. The difficulties and weakness inherent in this system are magnified in such circumstances. It is a logic, moreover, which means that either national NGOs are aligned, or they cannot operate. With a system which is ill-defined and non-negotiated, positions can harden and polarisation easily occurs. In these situations, all too often relief policy is made on the hoof, and interventions occur when and where possible, rather than according to need. In many instances of dire distress, no access at all is possible.

These difficulties can be resolved only through protracted negotiation between all parties at national and international levels. Such negotiations would have to consider at least two key areas of concern: (a) working towards defining more precisely the contractual relations between government, donors and NGOs, including questions of targeting; and (b) pursuing the reform of the rules of non-international war to ensure that they take into account the nature of internal conflict. While initially these negotiations would have to take place in stages and at different levels, the final aim would be to work towards the amalgamation of the two. In other words, the intention would be to reform the contractual relations that define the donor/NGO safety net in such a way that they are comprehensive, binding on parties, including government, and based upon a modernisation of the rules of war.

The question of sovereignty

This report has sought to show the importance of issues of food and sustenance in internal conflict. These are both a weapon and a goal. In this situation the donor/NGO system exercises a good deal of influence, some of which may be unintentional but, nevertheless, is unavoidable. The UN/NGO cross-border relief operation into South Sudan, for example, constitutes an indirect recognition of the SPLA. Moreover, since it represents a way of preventing further population displacement, it means that the North can never (if it ever could) force a military conclusion. In other words, the donor/NGO safety net has been drawn into the effective partitioning of Sudan. In the case of Eritrea and Tigray, although donors and NGOs have always kept a low profile to avoid recognition issues, it must, nevertheless, be the case that the huge amounts of relief food that have crossed the border

from Sudan since the mid-1980s have helped retain population and thus sustain the movements in these areas. While there have been no designs other than of a humanitarian nature, these examples indicate that the donor/NGO system has little choice but to operate along the fault lines of African sovereignty. This is a further complication in the government and donor/NGO relationship. Events within the USSR and, in particular, the real possibility of Eritrea's negotiated independence through the Organisation of African Unity, could well increase pressure for new forms of sovereignty in Africa. These considerations increase the need for the reform of the donor/NGO system.

It may well be that it is not possible to disengage the donor/NGO safety net from the nexus of national and international political relations in which it is currently embedded. At best, attempts at reform may achieve only a partial freeing up of elements, and secure only a limited space for operation. Such an attempt is necessary, however, because not only do the people of Africa need assistance, but without reform it will be difficult to improve other areas of weakness. Specifically, it is necessary to restore and maintain public confidence in the ability to intervene and ameliorate suffering and, at the same time, the political support must be secured to address the issue of the chronic underfunding and gross inadequacies of the present arrangements. Rather than the 'can-do' message of the 1980s, agencies will need to take a longer-term view in the 1990s, and adopt a position which, apart from reflecting what they are doing on the ground, indicates their role in the process of reform.

7.4 Oxfam's Position

The agenda for reform is a broad one. Oxfam's national and international standing, however, means that it is ideally placed to initiate such a process. Its direct experience of the causes and effects of conflict is second to none, while its current archive of local knowledge, including targeting issues, is far in excess of anything held within academic institutions. This is a strong position from which to begin.

7.5 Summary and Conclusion

This report has attempted to provide a broad briefing on the question of war and famine in Africa. Its main conclusions are:

- 1** Conventional approaches or ideas concerning war are not helpful in understanding internal conflict in Africa.
- 2** Current policy approaches which see war as a short-term problem also fail to appreciate the nature of internal conflict.
- 3** Local conflict is linked to the instability of semi-subsistence, which is being exacerbated by Africa's shrinking resource base.
- 4** Because of this link, local conflict is a long-term and growing problem.
- 5** Up to a half of the people who suffer from food insecurity in Africa have been affected by war.
- 6** The specificity of African famine is defined by the interaction of enviro-economic and conflict factors. Under enviro-economic conditions the coping strategies inherent in semi-subsistence economies are an important means of mitigating

famine. Conflict destroys semi-subsistence economies and/or prevents coping strategies from operating, and this exacerbates the effects of famine.

- 7 Local conflicts, fuelled by disappearing resources, are the vehicles through which internal wars are fought.
- 8 Internal wars are fought on a terrain of semi-subsistence economies, which become points of both defence and attack.
- 9 The linking of local and internal conflicts introduces massive imbalances which polarise, reorganise and, in some cases, destroy ethnic groups.
- 10 The political economy of internal war depends upon variously controlling, incapacitating, or destroying semi-subsistence economies.
- 11 War accentuates the transformation of family and gender relations already underway as a result of enviro-economic factors.
- 12 One cannot be neutral in an internal conflict.
- 13 Because internal war is linked to and exacerbates local conflict, formal peace treaties that do not address the problem of local imbalance will not prevent continuing insecurity.
- 14 The most visible aspect of internal war is the massive displacement of population.
- 15 The logic of internal war systematically violates the existing rules of war. These rules, however, are in urgent need of modernising.
- 16 The effects of war in Africa are incalculable, but it has contributed greatly to economic decline and the growth of food insecurity.
- 17 The effects of famine caused by enviro-economic factors and conflict have provided the basis upon which Africa has been re-integrated into the new world order through the internationalisation of public welfare.
- 18 Given that the problem of conflict is long-term, this welfare system is inadequate and in urgent need of reform.
- 19 The aim of reform would be to establish a contractual relation that defines the donor/NGO safety net in terms which are comprehensive, binding, and based upon a revision of the rules of war.
- 20 Oxfam is well placed to systematise its experience and use its standing to initiate reform. A communications strategy would indicate the complex and entrenched nature of the problem, and Oxfam's role in the reform process.

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