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Old and New Wars

by S. Mansoob Murshed

We are used to viewing war as something that happens between states. Contemporary wars, however, mostly occur between groups within the same country, and primarily within the developing world. Are these civil wars fundamentally irrational, and could the differences underlying these disputes not be settled peacefully? Sadly, conflict may be the product of rational decisions, even if it is only of a bounded or myopic rational choice variety. Even a terrible genocide, such as the one in Rwanda, is often carefully planned to meet a well-defined objective. Since the end of the Cold War, conflict in developing countries has cost 5 million civilian lives, and displaced 50 million people. Conflict is also a major cause of poverty.

In the new rational choice literature on conflict, a distinction is often made between *grievance*, a motivation based on a sense of injustice regarding the treatment of a social group, and *greed*, an acquisitive desire similar to crime, albeit on a greater scale. In many ways the former refers to an intrinsic motivation, and the latter to an extrinsic or pecuniary incentive to go to war. These motives are not entirely separate in practice, and change as conflict progresses.

Grievances include systematic economic discrimination against groups based on ethno-linguistic or religious differences. Extreme poverty and poor social conditions, including refugee camps, also facilitate conflict by making soldiering attractive. Many contemporary civil wars have an ethnic or nationalist dimension, and ethnicity, whether based on language, religion or other distinctions, is often a more effective basis for collective action in poor countries than other social divisions such as class. In coalescing groups, therefore, current and historical grievances play a crucial part. Inequalities across a small number of clearly identifiable groups further facilitate grievances. More often than not, such inequalities take the form of high asset inequality, discriminatory public spending and unequal access to the benefits of state patronage, such as government jobs. Furthermore, state failure in providing security and a minimum level of public goods often force individuals to rely on kinship ties for support and security. Ethnicity, however, must be treated with caution. Indeed, where there is considerable ethnic diversity (e.g. in Tanzania), we do not see much conflict.

Greed as a motive for conflict arises mainly in the context of natural resource endowments in Africa. Capturable natural resource rents, such as alluvial diamonds in Angola and Sierra Leone, can result in contests over the right to control them, which may take the form of warfare, as well as criminality and corruption.

The greed-versus-grievance dichotomy provides a useful beginning to the discussion of the causes of conflict. But for these forces to take the form of large-scale violence there must be other factors at work. A functioning social contract, and the concomitant institutions that distribute income and resolve disputes, can prevent the violent expression of greed or grievance. Furthermore, the outbreak of conflict always requires triggers, both internal and external. External triggers involve support from an outside power; internal triggers refer to events that induce parties to abandon peaceful negotiation in favor of war.

"...peacemaking must reconstitute the social contract."

Conflict-affected nations have histories of weak or degenerating social contracts. This weakness is often a legacy of colonialism, which institutionalized mechanisms favoring certain groups over others. Furthermore, the risk of conflict is greater when societies are in transition from autocracy to democracy because state failure is then most acute, and the social contract at its weakest.

Another form of the new wars, in addition to domestic conflicts, is transnational terrorism, and the strategy of war on terrorism to combat it. Here intrinsic motivation, often in the form of a collective sense of humiliation, plays a greater role; therefore, deterrence against terrorists may backfire if it hardens their resolve

to resist. A further new type of war is associated with the aggressive unilateralism of the United States and regional powers such as India and Israel, which allows them to pursue strategic aims through force in a manner unthinkable during superpower rivalry.

At the risk of over-generalization, most of Africa's wars are driven by the desire to capture lootable natural resource rents. Within the former Soviet Union, the repudiation by the elite of the earlier socialist social contract plays a huge role in causing conflict. In Asia, deep-seated historical grievances motivate most conflicts.

Conflict resolution is more difficult when the intrinsic motivation to fight is strong, as is the case in secessionist wars driven by historical grievances and certain types of terrorism. It is also difficult to sustain peace when parties feel tempted to return to war so that they can continue looting valuable resources. To be successful, however, peacemaking must reconstitute the social contract. That means broad-based reconstruction, and a solution that does not leave any of the belligerents worse off than they were prior to war.

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The Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and facilitating the processes whereby people, skills, technology, equipment, and financial and economic resources can be shifted away from the defense sector and applied to alternative civilian uses.

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BICC staff wish you all a happy and successful 2003!

Staff Spotlight:

Mark Sedra

Mark Sedra began working at BICC in September 2001 as an Intern funded by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) placed at BICC by our partner organization in Canada, Project Ploughshares. After his Canadian-sponsored internship ended in February 2002, he continued his research at BICC. For the first eight months of his tenure at the Center, he worked on BICC's Northern Ireland project, studying demilitarization in the Northern Ireland peace process.

In June 2002 Mark began work on a new BICC project analyzing security sector reform in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Under the auspices of this project, he has monitored developments in the five main pillars of the internationally-directed Afghan security sector reform process: military reform; police reform; judicial reform; counter-narcotics; and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. In particular, he has endeavored to assess the effectiveness of international donor policies pertaining to security. His work on this project resulted in a BICC paper entitled "Challenging the Warlord Culture: Security Sector Reform in Post-Taliban Afghanistan" that was published in October 2002. He will continue to work on this project as a Junior Researcher at BICC.

Mark began his academic career at the University of Toronto where he completed an Hons. B.A. in History and Political Science in 2000. He proceeded to study International History at the London School of Economics (LSE) completing a M.Sc. in 2001. Mark's graduate research at the LSE focused on the historical roots of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He will continue his research on this area when he begins his Ph.D. at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in September 2003.

Outside of work, Mark enjoys traveling, reading and watching films.

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BICC's Work on Water and Conflicts

BICC started to work on the topic of water and conflict approximately one year ago. At present, the main emphasis of BICC's work lies on the facilitation of transboundary water management processes as a strategy of crisis prevention and an approach to conflict management.

The need for integrated, cooperative solutions is particularly urgent in the 261 river basins that are shared by two or more states. The significance of these river basins is underscored by the fact that they encompass nearly a half of the territory and population of the world. Competition over this precious resource could increasingly become a source of tension – and even conflict – between as well as within states. Many countries are reluctant to submit to international legislation on water (for example, the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses). The analysis of bilateral and multilateral agreements on the common use of freshwater confirms the high conflict potential of water as a resource, on one hand, while on the other hand demonstrating that states are ready to encounter these potential conflicts through active cooperation. Thus, contrary to the many worst-case scenarios discussed in recent years, history has in fact shown that water can provide a powerful incentive for cooperation and the reconciliation of diverging views. At the International Conference on Freshwater in Bonn 2001, as well as in other contexts, it has frequently been pointed out that the potential for shared water resources to become a medium for regional peace and sustainable development through dialogue, cooperation, and facilitated participatory management of river basins is very high.

BICC has been contracted by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation - GTZ) to co-organize and facilitate the German Session during the **3rd World Water Forum**. The Forum will take place from **16 to 23 March 2003 in Kyoto**, Japan. The session will focus on *Facilitating Transboundary Water Management*, which is a main emphasis of German development cooperation in the water sector.

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Forum on Women and Security

On 31 October 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, a landmark resolution on women, peace and security. It calls for gender sensitive policies in the management of international peace and security and for "increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict". It also provides measures for ensuring equal representation of women at all levels in conflict management.

Unlike most Security Council pronouncements, Resolution 1325 has an active lobby of feminist and peace-activist NGOs monitoring its implementation. In Germany, a debate has emerged within this movement regarding the role of the German government in ensuring the full implementation of the resolution.

In January 2003, Germany took up a seat as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for two years. In February, Germany will hold the rotational presidency of the Council. A number of institutes and groups in Germany have indicated their intention of monitoring the German government's performance in the UN body.

On behalf of the Feminist Institute of the Heinrich-Böll Foundation, BICC recently compiled a background paper on the Security Council and the state of implementation of Resolution 1325. The paper will be presented at a workshop organized by the Heinrich-Böll Foundation in Berlin on 17 January 2003. The workshop aims to formulate policy recommendations on feminist and gender issues for Germany's contribution to the work of the Security Council.

It is hoped that a permanent forum on women and peace will be established, ideally including political foundations, NGOs, academics and research institutes with expertise in gender and conflict management. This forum could serve as a panel for consultation and discussion as well as an organ for civil society. It could monitor the work of the German government, comment on developments in the Security Council and on the international arena and press for the full implementation of gender sensitive approaches at all levels in relevant bodies of the UN system in accordance with Resolution 1325. The primary aim of the forum would be to influence the German input to the proceedings of the Security Council by issuing concrete policy recommendations to the German government.

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BICC Publications

In addition to its annual *conversion survey,* the *BICC disarmament and conversion studies* and other books, BICC publishes *reports*, *briefs,* and *papers*. These series analyze the international conversion process, report on conversion projects and experience gained, and offer scientific as well as practical know-how. Further details can be obtained at www.bicc.de/publications/.

Brief 26:
Andreas Heinemann-Grüder, *Becoming an Ex-military Man: Demobilization and Reintegration of Military Professionals in Eastern Europe*, October 2002

Paper 25:
Mark Sedra, *Challenging the Warlord Culture: Security Sector Reform in Post-Taliban Afghanistan,* October 2002

Paper 26:
Jocelyn Mawdsley, *The Gap between Rhetoric and Reality: Weapons Acquisition and ESDP,* December 2002

BICC Notes

We would like to welcome **Maria Lensu**, a Finnish national, who joined BICC on 1 December 2002 to work as a writer/researcher on BICC's publications, mainly on the *Conversion Survey*. Maria got her M.Sc. (Econ) in International Relations from the London School of Economics, where she is also currently completing a Ph.D. in Government. Previously, she has contributed to and edited several publications in the field of international relations, worked for the Finnish Red Cross and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and taught at the LSE and Richmond University.

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On 9 December 2002, the Director of BICC, Peter Croll, participated in a **conference on conflict and post-conflict in Colombia**, entitled ***"Preparing the Future"***, organized by the Fundación Ideas Para la Paz (Foundation Ideas for Peace, FIP), UNDP and the University of the Andes. This was the first in a series of fora organized at the University of the Andes in Bogota, with interdisciplinary working groups on post conflict peacebuilding in Colombia. The goal was to identify the main challenges faced by Colombia in peacebuilding and to learn from other countries' experiences. FIP is a think tank and an NGO that promotes debate on the causes and solutions to the Colombian conflict. Possible BICC co-operation with the Foundation and the University was discussed and will start early this year.

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The ***Joint Conference of the Churches on Development (GKKE)*** presented its fifth annual report on German arms transfers on 13 December 2002. The GKKE supports the present course of restrictive German arms export policies. At the same time, it continues to highlight critically some weaknesses and inconsistencies in current policies, for instance with respect to deliveries to the UAS, Israel and South Africa. Michael Brzoska of BICC is member of the expert group that prepares the report for the GKKE.

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On 12/13 December 2002, Kees Kingma presented the background paper in a workshop on developing a framework for ***Lasting Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration***, organized by the International Peace Academy and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in New York. Discussions focussed particularly on the role of the UNDP in support of reintegration processes, following post-war demobilizations.

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Are there alternatives to military action in Iraq?
Prominent speakers, including Development Minister Heidi Wieczorek-Zeul and the German coordinator for transatlantic relations, Karsten Voigt, addressed this issue at a seminar organized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Hessische Stiftung für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung in Berlin on 16 December 2002. Michael Brzoska of BICC gave a presentation on the reform of sanctions on Iraq, arguing that a regime focusing on arms and relevant dual-use equipment could prevent Iraqi rearmament.

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On 16/17 December 2002, Martina Reuter and Sami Faltas (both Help Desk for Practical Disarmament) acted as rapporteurs for a working group on small arms at the **International Policy Dialogue *"Tackling Cross Border Crime"***, organized in Bonn by InWEnt-Capacity Building International. The conference focused on enhancing coordinated international cooperation on cross-border crime. It is anticipated that the international policy dialogue will help to raise awareness in the countries of origin and transit countries, as well as in the industrial countries. The conference primarily looked at ways to assist developing and transitional countries in formulating policies aimed at preventing and combating cross border crime.

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