A (NEW) AGENDA FOR (SUSTAINABLE) PEACE: CRAFTING A NEW ROLE FOR PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY IN UNDERSTANDING AND TRANSFORMING AFRICAN CONFLICTS

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1.   INTRODUCTION

Africa's wars have posed severe challenges for conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution, let alone the arduous task of successfully achieving conflict transformation. Jackson (2006:15) rightly asserts that analytically, there is little hope of discerning how Africa's wars end if there is not an acute and comprehensive understanding of how these wars begin, which factors drive them and in many instances exacerbate these conflict situations even further.

The African continent has been beset with violent conflicts, civil wars and extended periods of instability. The continent's future depends on the capacity to prevent, manage and resolve conflict effectively. Africa's turbulent history has been plagued by nearly 40 years of interstate, intrastate, ethnic, religious and resource conflicts. No less than 26 armed conflicts erupted in Africa between 1963 and 1968 affecting the lives and livelihoods of nearly 474 million people, representing 61% of the population of the continent and claiming over 7 million lives.[2]

Out of the 31 active conflicts in 2002, 13 were taking place in Africa. By the middle of the 1990s, the African continent appeared to be a chief beneficiary of the end of the Cold War. Wars that had been sustained by the Cold War, as well as by South African destabilization, were on the verge of ending (Wallensteen 2007:25). The African continent also experienced the greatest fluctuation in terms of the number of conflicts - from 14 wars in 1989 and 17 in 1990 and 1991, while the number of conflicts was down to nine in 1995, only to reflect an increase to 14 in 1998. While the number of conflicts in Africa revealed an exponential decrease, the severity of these conflicts showed a rapid increase.

Of the 19 major armed conflicts that were active in 2004, the majority were in Africa and Asia, with six conflicts in each region. Africa constituted one of the main

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arenas for major armed conflicts throughout the post-Cold War period. Since 1990, 19 conflicts occurred in 17 locations in this region. The vast majority (15) of the 18 intrastate conflicts in Africa in the period 1990-2004 concerned governmental power (Harbom and Wallensteen 2005:123).

Reacting to conflict has proven highly expensive for the international community and has strengthened the case for a greater focus on conflict prevention. The budget for UN peacekeeping operations in Africa from July 2004 to June 2005 amounted to a staggering US$2,86 billion. Africa received around US$7 billion in humanitarian aid between 1995 and 2001, and four of the top ten countries receiving such aid globally were African, much of it in response to violent conflict. Reconstruction is also expensive: it was estimated that the reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) alone will cost US$20 billion (Commission for Africa 2005:160). It is therefore not surprising that a number of studies have shown that conflict prevention is much more cost-effective than reaction to conflict situations.

The reality was however rather sobering. Successful conflict prevention proved to be elusive. Research undertaken over the period 1945 to 1993 suggests that about half of all peace agreements fail in the first five years after they have been signed (Licklider 1995:681).

Conflict prevention has remained a difficult and often elusive activity. The existing discourse on conflict is characterized by linear understandings of processes of conflict. According to Draman (2003:234), typically a conflict is considered to evolve through five stages: previolence, escalation, endurance, de-escalation, and postconflict. Similarly Samarasinghe (nd:2) argued that any violent conflict consists of five basic phases, namely the preconflict phase; the conflict emergence phase; the conflict and crisis phase, which is characterized by chaos and complex emergencies; the conflict-settlement phase; and the postconflict phase. It is seldom, however, that African conflicts do not progress beyond the conflict emergence phase, and are usually characterized by severe and intense conflict, consisting of brutal violence, chaos and complex emergencies as a result thereof.

Conflict prevention is not a new phenomenon. The post-Cold War era provided ample opportunity, especially in Africa, for acting preventively. However, negative peace - the absence of war - is invariably unsustainable and underpins the baleful statistic that half of Africa's wars have reignited within a decade of ending. Yet the construction of a positive peace that addresses the multifarious motivations of the combatants and their residual mutual suspicion is a challenge that lies beyond existing economic and political capacity (Furley and May 2006:5).

One of the core arguments this article will posit is that preventive diplomacy has not been successfully applied in resolving conflicts in Africa, and will continue to fail, unless greater emphasis is placed on structural prevention that includes an

assessment and strategy for responding to conflict attitudes,[3] such as misperception, hostility, suspicion, fear and distrust. There is widespread recognition that the range of activities associated with preventive diplomacy - mediation, diplomacy, fact-finding, preventive peacekeeping deployments and so forth - are only a subset of a much wider range of responses and measures to conflict prevention. It could be argued that preventive diplomacy initiatives, when taken alone and independently of a broader strategy of conflict prevention, are likely to fail unless they are linked to measures and actions that tackle the deeper or structural causes of conflict.

Preventive diplomatic efforts often fail to take into account that warring factions do not always readily see the situation as it really is, but only through their programmed perception. The peace initiatives that emerged to end the war in the DRC for instance did not take cognizance of the underlying conflict attitudes that were present from the outset of the conflict and the subsequent negotiations that followed to prevent further conflict. Furthermore, the continued implementation of preventive diplomacy (or often serious lack thereof) in its present format is likely to see the continuation of conflict and the repeated failure to cease hostilities, the failure to settle disputes and to ultimately resolve protracted conflicts in Africa. The article will also argue that preventive diplomacy consists of approaches and solutions to conflict that are often too generic. Therefore a diagnosis is often made of a conflict; a set of remedies is prescribed that often barely yields success in alleviating the immediate manifestations of conflict, often at the expense of treating and eliminating the structural and underlying causes of a conflict situation. This has resulted in denuding preventive diplomacy of a potentially significant role in addressing protracted violent conflict.

Greater emphasis should be placed on timely and adequate preventive action through the vigorous promotion of preventive diplomacy, particularly structural prevention, which aims to arrive at positive peace. Conflicts in many African countries could intermittently erupt again unless the structural and underlying causes of conflicts, crises and the various conflict attitudes are effectively dealt with from the outset. This article will also support the assertion by Leatherman, DeMars, Gaffney and Väyrynen (1999:98) that preventive actions should be extended along the entire spectrum of conflict, whereby preventive diplomacy is contextualized, and its basic objective, the forestalling and reduction of violence, is elaborated in different phases and stages of the conflict as opposed to merely focusing on one specific stage in the conflict cycle.

Greater attention should also be paid to the pervasive influence of social-psychological approaches to conflict in order to devise durable solutions and

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[3]   Conflict attitudes consist of those psychological states or conditions that accompany (and fre-quently exacerbate) both conflict situations and resultant conflict behaviour. According to Mitchell (1981: 25), the "psychology of conflict" is best regarded as an exacerbating factor, rather than a prime cause of social and international disputes.

sustainable peace agreements. This article will argue that social-psychological approaches should form an integral part of any strategy of preventive diplomacy that seeks to secure a definitive end to violent conflict.

The sobering statistics and assertions relating to conflict in Africa warrant further analysis of the complexity posed by Africa's conflicts.

2.   UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT AND WAR IN AFRICA

Dominated by international relations scholars and orthodox security studies experts who bring with them a largely neo-realist analytic framework, there is a widespread tendency to portray warfare in Africa in orthodox Clausewitzean terms, with its emphasis on professional military structures, "scientific" military strategy and tactics, military technology and capabilities and traditional war aims (Jackson 2006:16).

This analysis has proven ineffectual towards gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities of African conflict. It has therefore become a necessary and critical exercise to conduct an in-depth analysis of the structural causes of conflict in order to construct effective responses to prevent it, manage it, ultimately to transform it and subsequently to eliminate or mitigate the circumstances that facilitate the development and outbreak of further violent conflict. The key characteristics of contemporary warfare in Africa reveal what Jackson (2006:19) describes as the profound disjuncture between traditional security analyses and the kind of approaches that is needed for excavating the *real* causes of Africa's wars.

Africa's wars have been characterized to a large extent by the involvement of a multiplicity and diversity of military and non-military actors, namely government military formations, rebels, insurgents, private militias, warlords, criminal gangs, mercenaries, child soldiers and a plethora of other external actors who exert some or other form of influence (albeit being positive or negative) in conflict situations in a particular country. In addition these actors are often embedded in highly complex "war networks" (or what can be described as a "regional conflict complex"), that straddle territorial boundaries, identity and ethnic groups. The notion of purely civil or internal wars is no longer sustainable; most African wars are actually regional conflict formations, with added global connections and influences. A particularly useful contribution to achieve a greater understanding of this phenomenon is found in the work of Mary Kaldor (2006:2) who refers to the emergence of "new wars", that is, a new type of organized violence that has developed, particularly on the African continent. Kaldor stresses that in most of the literature, these "new wars" are described as internal or civil wars or else as "low-intensity conflicts". Yet, although most of these wars are localized, they involve a myriad of transnational connections so that the distinction between internal and external, between aggression (attacks

from abroad) and repression (attacks from inside the country), or even between local and global, are difficult to sustain (Kaldor 2006:3).

The purported aims of the protagonists in Africa's wars are also defying simple categorization. The multiplicity of participants translates into a multiplicity of objectives. While some groups may articulate genuine political grievances, or seek state power or self-determination, others pursue ethno-nationalist or religious goals (such as ethnically or religiously pure political communities) or the maintenance of élite power (Jackson 2006:20). Another important characteristic of the so-called "new wars" as espoused by Kaldor (2006:8) is the changed mode of warfare - the means through which these new wars are fought. The strategies of the new warfare draw on the experience of both guerrilla warfare and counter-insurgency, yet they are quite distinctive. The new warfare borrows from counter-insurgency techniques of destabilization aimed at sowing "fear and hatred". This often involves population expulsion through various means such as mass killing and forcible resettlement, as well as a range of political, psychological and economic techniques of intimidation (Kaldor 2006:9).

Simultaneously, local actors may be engaged in struggles to gain access to critical resources, such as water, land, grazing rights or security. In some instances violence is transformed from instrument to objective, that is, from a means to an end, to an end in itself.

The role of identity politics in Africa's wars form an important part of developing a greater understanding of the root causes of conflict in Africa and the driving factors that precipitate and exacerbate conflict in the African context (Jackson 2006:22). There is a range of crucial variables in the construction of political conflict, such as the pervasive role played by élites as well as ethnic-local, national, political, military and religious actors; the historical construction and maintenance of exclusive (and often antagonistic) identities by colonial and post-colonial ruling élites for the purposes of political and social control; the perceptions of insecurity between ethnic groups in situations of emergent anarchy or state failure; and the role of language, history, symbols and culture in fomenting inter-ethnic rivalry (Jackson 2006:22). In essence, it is argued that inflamed ethnic passions are the consequence of political conflict, not the cause. Typically therefore the tactics of Africa's "Big Men" in these wars involve arming ethnically based militias, propagating hate, fear, suspicion and manufacturing rumours and myths.

Extending these analyses, more openly constructivist approaches start with a salient question too often ignored by security studies scholars: what makes ordinary people acquiesce to or participate in political violence directed against those they once seemingly coexisted peacefully with?

Conflict is a multifaceted process and not one amenable to simple explanation. From state-controlled warfare to psychological brutality, there is a wide range of

social, economic, political and personal factors that account for what is taken to be a single phenomenon. Equally the question of cause and effect, and of possible motivation, invites careful consideration (Chabal 2005:2). The issue of "why" force is meted out, collectively or individually, is always intricate, even if its consequences are often plain to behold.

The crux as Chabal (2005:10) contends is whether the type and range of conflict found on the continent can be explained in terms of power or whether there are other processes at work that would invalidate a mere political approach to the question. Anthropologists, economists, psychologists and even sociologists may contend that a number of individual and collective cases of violent conflict on the African continent cannot simply be reduced to mere political explanations.

Furthermore – and one of the salient aspects this article will attempt to address – is that the analysis of politics and conflict in Africa, it should be added, is impossible without a wide-ranging or interdisciplinary framework, making use of the insights provided by other social sciences. Violence and conflict in Africa are still amenable to rational analysis and there can be no successful conflict prevention, resolution or transformation, unless the root causes of violence are properly understood and taken into account.

Orthodox analyses of Africa's wars have only been capable of providing limited understandings of their causes and characteristics. Moreover, Jackson (2006:25) stresses that the failure of effective conflict analysis has too often resulted in remedial bankruptcy. Misconceiving the deeper or structural causes of Africa's wars, practitioners have repeatedly applied unsuitable or ultimately damaging solutions to conflict settlements. The conceptual failure of conflict analysis has presaged the normative failure of conflict resolution. The true nature of Africa's wars suggests that conflict management has become wholly insufficient as a durable solution to endemic violence. What is required is the prioritization of preventive and transformative approaches to conflict resolution. Therefore it is necessary to explore the important role preventive diplomacy can play in addressing conflict in Africa, well beyond the traditional narrow confines that have been accorded to its place and role in the life cycle of conflict. It is furthermore important that a comprehensive understanding is present in any strategy of preventive diplomacy as to the pervasive influence conflict attitudes can assume in situations of violent conflict and this understanding should form an intricate part of preventive diplomatic efforts that are initiated.

3. CONFLICT PREVENTION: FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY - EXPANDING THE CONCEPTUAL BOUNDARIES OF PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

Preventive diplomacy certainly occupies a central place in any attempt to prevent conflict and indeed full-scale war. Intervening in advanced conflicts is exceptionally

difficult, costly and prone to failure. A wealth of theoretical and applied research on conflict prevention was generated since the 1950s (Menkhaus 2004: 420), and a promising array of international, regional and nongovernmental mechanisms for conflict prevention was established or expanded in the 1990s.

Of the five types of preventive action (structural prevention, early prevention, late prevention, conflict management and peace building), emphasis should be placed on early prevention (Menkhaus 2004:420). When disputes are close to the point of violence, light or operational prevention comes into play - this is referred to as preventive diplomacy. The effort to resolve conflict at an early stage is at the heart of prevention. It involves identifying the key issues, clearing mistrust and misperceptions and exploring feasible outcomes that bridge the opposing positions of the parties. It is at the early stages of a dispute where preventive measures have the greatest chance of success, but also where preventive diplomacy appears to be the most underdeveloped and underutilized and very often narrowly applied.

According to Menkhaus (2004: 434), to operationalize conflict prevention more effectively, six prerequisites must be met: firstly, the analytical capacity to predict and understand conflicts must be present; secondly, the structural capacity to predict and alert (are functional early warning systems in place?); thirdly, the operational capacity to prevent (do we have a toolbox of preventive methods?); fourthly, a strategic framework to guide coherent preventive action (is an effective strategy for preventing conflicts present in order to determine which tools of conflict prevention are to be used when?); the fifth prerequisite is the structural capacity to respond; and finally, the political will to prevent (is there a commitment to undertake and support preventive action?).

Preventive diplomacy is defined as "action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur" (Boutros-Ghali 1992:2). This tripartite definition thus sees preventive diplomacy as acting at several levels of a conflict (an approach this article argues is the best utilization of preventive diplomacy). Preventive diplomacy is distinguished from peacemaking which is "action to bring hostile parties to agreement, essentially through peaceful means", peace enforcement, which refers to "the use of armed force, as under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to contain or end a violent conflict" and peacekeeping which "involves efforts to maintain a cease-fire and foster a political settlement as well as the deployment of United Nations and other peacekeeping forces in the field" and from postconflict peace building, which "involves efforts not only to maintain order, but also, after a settlement is implemented, to increase cooperation among the parties to a conflict and to deepen their relationship by addressing the conditions that led to the dispute, fostering positive attitudes and allaying distrust, and building or strengthening common institutions and processes through which the parties interact and to identify

and support such structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict".

Michael Lund (1996:37) defines preventive diplomacy as "action taken in vulnerable places and times to avoid the threat or use of armed force and related forms of coercion by states or groups to settle the political disputes that can arise from the destabilizing effects of economic, social, political, and international change".

Lund (1996:46) identifies and distinguishes between three varieties or sub-types of preventive diplomacy, namely preconflict peace building, pre-emptive engagement and crisis prevention. These differ in terms of the conditions for which they are suited, their tasks, their time frames and their instruments.

The key to preventive diplomacy is "the timing of its activation in relation to evolving conditions in a given place on the ground". Preventive actions are needed when peace is unstable and threatens to erupt into violence. In the preconflict phase preventive diplomacy can assume different forms in efforts to bloc violent acts ("crisis prevention"), engage parties to cooperation ("pre-emptive engagement"), and promote dispute resolution ("preconflict peace building").

A related and important consideration that requires greater attention is conflict transformation. *The Berghof Institute handbook for conflict transformation* offers a broad definition of conflict transformation, claiming that "transformation is a generic, comprehensive concept referring to actions that seek to alter the various characteristics and manifestations of conflict by addressing its root causes over the long term, with the aim to transform negative ways of dealing with conflict into positive, constructive ways. The concept of conflict transformation stresses structural, behavioural and attitudinal aspects of conflict. It refers both to the process and structure of moving towards 'just peace'" (Ryan 2007:21).

A number of authors explain conflict transformation in the context of a continuum, generally beginning with "conflict settlement", then "conflict management", to "conflict resolution", and ending with "conflict transformation" (Botes 2003). Not everyone agrees that the term "conflict transformation" necessarily falls on a continuum. While some analysts see it as a significant departure from conflict resolution, others like Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (1999) view conflict transformation as a further development of conflict resolution. For them, the aim of conflict resolution is to transform conflict. Perhaps more importantly, they also suggest that the transformation concept provides some utility regarding the understanding of peace processes in the sense that transformation denotes a sequence of necessary transitional steps. Such a transformation represents not only removing the sources and causes of the situation that brought about the conflict, but also necessitates a transformation in the attitudes and relationship between the parties (Botes 2003).

Augsburger (1992) claims that conflict transformation, as opposed to conflict management or conflict resolution, occurs when there is a metamorphosis, or at

least considerable change, in one of three different elements. During the process of transformation, attitudes are firstly transformed by changing and redirecting negative perceptions. Secondly, behaviour is transformed and lastly, the conflict itself is transformed by seeking to discover, define, and remove incompatibilities between the parties. An important component of successful conflict transformation is therefore the notion that personal, relational, and structural transformation is essential to deal effectively with conflicts (Botes 2003).

In Africa, where conflict wreaked havoc in many states there is an urgent need to move beyond debates over whether preventive diplomacy is possible, difficult or necessary. There is a definite need to evolve the role preventive diplomacy plays, particularly in addressing and transforming conflicts in Africa. There is also a need to provide greater *substance* and *value* to this role. The devastation that was witnessed in the DRC, Darfur and Somalia provided ample justification for according greater urgency to the task of preventing violent conflict.

4.   A THEORY OF PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

As discussed earlier the core and salient issue is the timing and nature of intervention in a situation of conflict. Michael Lund (1996:37) devised a figure that depicts the place or stage that preventive diplomacy occupies in the full life history of a typical conflict in relation to actions taken at other points in a conflict. (See Annex A.) The theoretical framework for this study will be based on Michael Lund's model of preventive diplomacy. He proposed a model of conflict where at any of these points it would be possible to either continue upward on the scale of conflict, or turn downward and revert to a lower and more peaceful level.

Preventive diplomacy will typically commence when tensions in the relationships between parties are in danger of shifting from stable peace to unstable peace or worse. According to Lund (1996:41), it then applies not only to situations that have seen no recent conflict, but also to postconflict situations where violence or coercion have been largely terminated but the efforts of postconflict peace building are apparently insufficient to move the conflict into stable peace away from the danger of re-escalation. Its aim is to keep actual or potential disputes from taking the form of confrontation or all-out violence and to return them to processes of regular diplomacy or national politics, or a more desirable state of durable peace. But if it fails, and such situations deteriorate into crises, preventive diplomacy ceases to apply as a concept. At the operational level of conflict prevention, Michael Lund argues that preventive measures are especially effective at the level of unstable peace, which is defined as "a situation where tension and suspicion among parties run high but violence is either absent or only sporadic" (Lund 1996:39). Preventive diplomacy is therefore deemed as being especially operative at the level of unstable peace.

Yet this is, according to preventive diplomacy, a relatively narrowly defined role and requires a revision in order to be of greater value in addressing complex conflict situations that do not necessarily cease when intervention is carried out.

5.   REDEFINING THE ROLE OF PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY IN AFRICAN CONFLICTS

According to Leatherman *et al.* (1999:98), it is necessary to extend preventive actions along the entire spectrum of conflict, from latent tensions through the culmination and resolution of conflict to postconflict peace building. According to this approach, preventive diplomacy is contextualized and its basic objective, the forestalling and reduction of violence, is elaborated in different stages of the conflict as opposed to merely focusing on one specific stage - unstable peace as suggested by the theoretical framework of Lund.

Therefore, according to the approach by Leatherman *et al.* (1999:99), the key phases of preventive diplomacy include: firstly, conflict prevention that entails preventing violent disputes from arising between parties either by structural, institutional, economic, or cultural remedies; secondly, escalation prevention, which entails preventing both the vertical and horizontal escalation of hostilities to more destructive means of warfare and to involve additional actors; and thirdly, postconflict prevention entailing the prevention of the re-emergence of disputes by reintegrating and reconstructing the war-torn society. Early prevention of conflict is preferable because it is more feasible. At this stage issues are still specific and more amenable to transformation, the number of parties to the conflict is limited, thus reducing its complexity and early measures are cost-effective.

An argument could be made for the utility of preventive diplomacy beyond the narrow confines of Lund's conceptual framework. Even Lund (2006:9) acknowledged this and provides an expanded definition that builds upon his original discussion of the concept: "Preventive diplomacy, or conflict prevention, consists of governmental or non-governmental actions, policies, institutions that are taken deliberately to keep particular states or organized groups within them from threatening or using organized violence, armed force, or related forms of coercion such as repression as the means to settle interstate or national political disputes, especially where the existing means cannot peacefully manage the destabilizing effects of economic, social, political and international change. So defined, preventive diplomacy might be needed either before a new conflict starts or after a violent conflict has abated to avoid relapse." Clearly, even Lund asserts that preventive diplomacy could be applied after a violent conflict has already manifested itself, has abated, but where the potential exists for a relapse.

As alluded to earlier, classical conflict resolution was mainly concerned with entry into the conflict itself and with how to enable parties to violent conflict to

resolve the issues between them in non-violent ways - however the contemporary approach is to take a wider view of the timing and nature of intervention. Central to this aspect is identifying the crucial point where intervention in a situation of conflict is feasible. The crucial aspect therefore in assessing any conflict situation relates to when intervention should be considered - related to the actual operational aspects of preventive diplomacy in practice.

6. RIPENESS THEORY - PROPITIOUS CONDITIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

A particularly important aspect in relation to preventive diplomacy is the timing of intervention. A salient question in this regard that requires examination is related to the most propitious time in the emergence of a conflict to conduct a preventive effort namely *when* protracted conflicts are "ripe for resolution". "Ripeness of time" is considered to be the absolute essence of diplomacy, and in the case of preventive diplomacy the core foundation upon which its successful implementation rests.

One of the most influential ideas in the field of conflict management is that conflicts cannot be resolved at just any point in their development but must be "ripe for resolution". According to this approach, an essential condition making for ripeness is a "mutually hurting stalemate" between the parties to conflict - that is, a point in a conflict where neither party can prevail over the other. Once they recognize that they have reached such a stalemate and cannot achieve their objectives by armed struggle, the parties become more willing to enter into negotiations (Wallensteen 2007:43).

Ripeness is better conceptualized as being part of a continuum. The conceptions of ripeness tend to fall into two broad categories. The first group tends to view ripeness in terms of temporal factors related to when within the lifecycle of a dispute mediation is attempted. The ripeness theory is intended to explain why, and therefore when, parties to a conflict are susceptible to their own or others' efforts to turn the conflict toward resolution through negotiation. The concept of a ripe moment centres on the parties' perception of a mutually hurting stalemate, optimally associated with an impending, past or recently avoided catastrophe. The notion behind the concept is that, when parties find themselves locked in a conflict from which they cannot escalate to victory and this deadlock is painful to both of them, they seek a way out (Zartman 2006:102).

One of the pivotal elements necessary for a ripe moment is said to be less complex and controversial: the perception of a way out. Therefore if two parties to a conflict perceive themselves to be in a hurting stalemate and perceive the possibility of a negotiated solution (a way out), the conflict is ripe for resolution. The ripe moment is however necessarily a perceptual event, not one that stands

alone in objective reality. It can be resisted so long as the parties in question refuse or otherwise are able to block out that perception.

A stalemate therefore exists in the minds of the leaders. If it is reflected on the battlefield, in the form of trenches and unbreakable defensive lines, there is a stalemate in the war and it might be the right opportunity to interject ideas of conflict resolution. It may come, for instance, right after one side has tried and failed to break the military stalemate with an offensive. The rational calculations are difficult to consider and see from the outside. At a certain moment in time, it may be possible to argue rationally for a continuation of war as well as a search for peace. This makes it difficult at any one particular time to determine, with some certainty, that there *is* a ripe moment (Wallensteen 2007:44).

However, the same calculations can pull the equation in a different direction. In a negotiation, a party may therefore have an alternative recourse to action that remains outside the realm of the talks. Rational calculations attempt to apply a specific timing to the resolution of conflicts - it attempts to specify that conflict can be brought to an agreed ending. From a rational calculation perspective the urgency of solving a conflict, using the ripe moment, may be lost and hence timing is considered crucial. Opportunities should be seized, particularly in a situation where a war is ongoing (Wallensteen 2007:45).

An extension of the notion of ripeness to the relations between enduring rivals offers significant intuitive appeal. Enduring rivalries are among the most dangerous and conflict-prone dyads in the international system. As a result, developing means to aid conflict prevention and management between long-term rivals is a critical goal. The very nature of enduring rivalries, with their legacy of mutual distrust and pain, makes conflict prevention and conflict management more difficult to achieve than in other types of disputes (Greig 2006: 264).

Perceptual aspects are increasingly problematic in relation to the successful implementation of preventive diplomacy. In this context social-psychological approaches to conflict resolution can play a vital role in cultivating the perception of a way out and thus the viability of conflict termination and ultimately reaching a sustainable peace settlement.

7.   SHORTCOMINGS IN LUND'S THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - ADVOCATING THE INCLUSION OF SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

Although Lund's conceptual framework provides a valuable insight into the theory of preventive diplomacy and the salience of the position it occupies in relation to conflict, an additional theoretical consideration may be included into his assessment.

Lund's theoretical framework fails to address the impact psychological variables and prevailing conflict attitudes may exert on a conflict situation.

The Constitution of UNESCO states in part that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed; ... And that a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world…." (UNESCO 2002:7).

The document further suggests that ignorance, misunderstanding, misperception and mistrust lie at the root of problems that arise among nations and through which their differences have all too often broken into war. The need to assess how conflict attitudes fuel and affect conflicts in the African context is therefore crucial, as this appears to be an often overlooked dynamic when addressing conflict situations on the continent and that frequently sees the regression into all-out war.

Subsequent wars and conflicts led to the emergence of what has become known as the security dilemma, a situation in which the actions taken by each state to increase its own security had the effect of simultaneously decreasing the security of its neighbours (Herz 1950; Booth and Wheeler 2007; Cottam *et al*. 2004). Faced with what is perceived (either correctly or incorrectly) to be a threatening international security environment, national leaders take action they perceive to be defensive ones to protect themselves from these external threats. Knowing that their own motivations are peaceful, these leaders tend to make the assumption that their true (peaceful) intensions are equally clear to all of their neighbours. As a result policymakers, pursuing what they believe to be purely defensive military build-ups, often fail to understand how their actions are likely to be perceived (or misperceived) by neighbouring states.

In the numerous efforts to secure peace in conflict situations as complex and diverse as the conflict in Somalia, Sudan and the DRC, very little analysis has been done on the way in which conflict attitudes such as misperception, fear, distrust, hostility and suspicion, became not only a major stumbling block to the peace process, but also negatively affected the outcome of peace processes and the resulting peace agreements. The purpose of this article, within this limited ambit, will therefore not be an attempt to provide an exhaustive analysis of the role of psychological drivers of conflict, nor an attempt to extrapolate its effects onto the numerous conflict situations being witnessed in Africa today either, but will instead attempt to highlight the potential value of taking social-psychological perspectives of conflict into account in augmenting Lund's preventive diplomacy toolbox and any other approaches adopted to address violent and protracted conflict as well as highlighting the potentially negative influence this often underestimated variable can exert on negotiations to prevent and end conflict.

The structuralist school of intervention places considerable importance on the dynamics of conflict and the interests of the parties, arguing that mediated interventions that are not timed to coincide with hurting stalemates run a real risk of failure. There is general consensus that ripeness is more of a cultivated and not just an inherited condition (Crocker, Hampson & Aall 1999:25). In fact, mediators can deploy a myriad of techniques and measures to foster the ripening process in order to move the parties from a hurting stalemate to a political settlement. In addition to timing, it is crucial to have a strategy of peacemaking and mediation, to know how to move the parties, to have a sense of how they can be engaged in a process and to understand the dynamics of the conflict cycle and the point at which the mediator decides to enter it.

The need to utilize a synthesis of perspectives or paradigms is therefore pronounced. The trouble however with establishing paradigms, is that they rarely translate well into reality. Another shortcoming of paradigms is that they can imply that one approach will be more successful than the others in dealing with all of the issues and events of the conflict cycle. The fact that more than one set of factors are at play in any given conflict argues against an intervention strategy that is directed at a single cause or at alleviating only one set of social or political pressures. It seems more useful to envision intervention as a coordinated series of concurrent and consecutive strategies directed towards the long-term goal of resolving the conflict.

A critical omission, therefore, in Lund's theoretical framework is particularly related to the absence of social-psychological approaches in his preventive diplomacy toolbox. The inclusion of social-psychological approaches is critical to revealing the deep fissures that often exist, persist and exacerbate a conflict situation, despite the signing of peace agreements. The failure to consider psychological drivers of conflict could potentially render the use of any other approaches in preventing violent conflict obsolete, even futile, and could undermine the successful conclusion of a peace agreement.

According to Solomon (2006:219-236), unfortunately the various interventions in the DRC conflict for instance were characterized by third-party attempts to arrive at paper peace agreements as quickly as possible. The psychology of diplomacy, though, teaches us that the process of reaching an agreement is often more important than the agreement itself.

8.   UNDERSTANDING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DIPLOMACY

Very little conclusive research has been conducted on how psychological variables, particularly conflict attitudes such as negative images, attitudes, perceptions and conflict behaviour can fuel and exacerbate a conflict situation, especially conflicts in Africa, and how this may derail the success of preventive diplomacy in resolving

such severe conflicts. The complexity of a conflict situation also has the potential to affect the outcome of negotiations, which are deemed as critical to bringing parties to a conflict to end their violent confrontation.

This analysis will propose the inclusion of an additional dimension to complement Lund's model, by examining how psychological variables fuel conflicts as developed by CR Mitchell (1981). According to Mitchell, parties involved in a conflict situation are likely to possess complex cognitions and evaluations about themselves and the opposing party and the environment within which the conflict situation arises. These complex cognitions and evaluations necessitate a more detailed consideration of the nature of conflict attitudes, their causes, common features, the way in which they affect various forms of conflict behaviour, and the way in which they affect the negotiation process and act as a hindrance in efforts at finding a solution to the conflict.

According to Solomon (2006: 231), one of the major omissions in many of the activities around preventive diplomacy relates to those variables relating to personality and psychology. This, according to Solomon, is a damning omission, given the fact that there is a burgeoning literature that graphically illustrates the importance of psychological determinants for those engaging in preventive diplomacy.

Within the often narrowly-defined ambit of diplomacy, the psychology of political relations between states (and adversaries to conflict) is rarely touched upon or explored in a more in-depth nature (Seldowitz 2004: 47). Diplomats and negotiators rarely consider the importance of psychology to their interactions with parties to a conflict situation, and rarely is consideration accorded to the behaviour of states or their leaders and the significance this may hold for the overall outcomes and success of peace negotiations.

The social-psychological approach for the purposes of this article and argument is one of the most important paradigms of third-party intervention in conflict, which focuses on the processes of communication and exchange as a way to change perceptions and attitudes (Crocker *et al*. 1999:22).

The social-psychological study of conflict is characterized not so much by the nature of the conflicting units it studies, as by its approach to conflict. This approach is distinguished by its focus on the interplay between psychological and social processes. It is concerned with the perceptions, beliefs, and values of the conflicting units as well as their actualities; these may or may not correspond. It is concerned with how the social realities of the parties in conflict affect their perceived and experienced realities and how the psychological realities of the conflicting parties affect the development of their social realities (Deutsch and Shichman 1986:220).

One of the driving assumptions behind the social-psychological approach is that although parties identify specific issues as the causes of conflict, conflict also reflects subjective, phenomenological and social fractures and, consequently,

analyzing "interests" can be less important than identifying the underlying needs that govern each party's perception of the conflict (Crocker *et al.* 1999:23). Because much of human conflict is anchored in conflicting perceptions and in misperception, the contribution of third parties lies in changing the perceptions, attitudes, values, and behaviours of the parties to a conflict.

Social-psychological approaches stress the importance of changing attitudes and the creation of new norms in moving parties toward reconciliation. Early intervention, according to this formulation, is preferable because once relations have deteriorated because of violence, and attitudes are embedded in "we-they" images of the enemy, it becomes much more difficult for mediators to move the parties toward sober reflection about their real-world choices and to change perceptions (Crocker *et al.* 1999:25). According to Crocker *et al.* (1999), it seems more useful to envision intervention as a coordinated series of concurrent and consecutive strategies directed towards the long-term goal of resolving the conflict. The social-psychological approach concurs with the assessment of Lund that most conflicts - even protracted ones - have a life cycle of their own, characterized by various phases or stages. These include a period of rising tension between or among parties, followed by confrontation, the outbreak of violence, and the escalation of military hostilities.

During these various stages of conflict, the intensity of the security dilemma among rival communal groupings is likely to vary. Parties will tend to feel more secure in their relations with other groupings when the level of violence is low, formal ties exist between different groups and institutionalized channels of communication, though perhaps frayed, are still available. At this stage of the conflict cycle, there may well be more chances for mediation because attitudes and perceptions have not hardened and parties are still willing to talk to each other (Crocker *et al.* 1999:26). As violence increases, different groups start to arm themselves, and factions become increasingly aware of the real-power asymmetries that exist between themselves and other groups, the security dilemma will become more acute and the desire for peaceful and cooperatively based strategies of conflict will weaken.

The notion of a conflict cycle suggests that while the level of violence is low (a condition that may occur at the beginning and at the end of a conflict cycle), there are greater opportunities for a variety of mediators to engage both the parties and the larger society in a wide range of activities. These conditions, however, present fewer opportunities for a real movement toward settlement on disputed issues. As one approaches higher levels of violence, the opportunities for mediators to engage the parties may diminish, but the likelihood of mediation success, that is, helping the parties to negotiate an agreement, may well increase as the conflict reaches a plateau or what Zartman calls a hurting stalemate (Crocker *et al.* 1999:27). Lund's theoretical framework identifies where preventive diplomacy would be most effectively applied, yet fails to distinguish between the varying nature of the level

of violence and the potential barriers to entry as outlined in the following table by Crocker *et al.* (1999:28) (See Annex B). This model clearly identifies the level of violence, the number of potential entry points, the potential barriers to entry and the opportunity to exercise procedural control. It is clear that as the level of violence rises, the number of potential entry points in a conflict situation declines as perceptions and attitudes are hardening. The barriers to entry are increasing as parties perceive increasing risks of negotiation, coupled with status and legitimacy concerns. As a situation of high levels of violence transpires, the number of potential entry points into a conflict situation is even less, as "we-they" images of the enemy have hardened. Furthermore the barriers to entry are high as parties are locked into a continuing struggle. Therefore, although a peace agreement has been formally signed, the underlying issues that led to conflict in the first place, as well as the accompanying tensions and suspicions and deeply-entrenched hatreds and enmity amongst parties may continue to persist.

Empirically wars often do not end when peace accords are signed. In fact, the process of ending conflict in a negotiated settlement often continues long after agreements have been signed (Walter 2006:206). Therefore, conflict prevention, notably preventive diplomacy, should also not cease, especially if a conflict continues in defiance of peace.

In this context key psychological obstacles exist to the detriment of preventive diplomacy's effective functioning, eschewing the positive role it can play, especially in the African context (Wessells 2004:80). Psychologically, the changing nature of a conflict poses significant challenges to preventive diplomacy. Even following a ceasefire or the signing of a peace agreement, communities on the ground remain deeply divided, harbouring lingering hatreds and confronting persistent structural causes of violence that may not have been adequately addressed by the signing of a peace agreement.

The key phases of preventive diplomacy should therefore include the following: Firstly, conflict prevention that entails preventing violent disputes from arising between parties either by structural, institutional, economic, or cultural remedies at the level of unstable peace as developed by Michael Lund's theoretical framework. Secondly, and most importantly, preventive diplomacy could continue to play a role during escalation prevention (at the level of crisis and war) in order to compliment efforts undertaken during crisis diplomacy (crisis management), peacekeeping (conflict termination), peacemaking (conflict management) and peace enforcement (conflict mitigation), which entails preventing both the vertical and horizontal escalation of hostilities to more destructive means of warfare and to involve additional actors. Thirdly, preventive diplomacy plays a role during the phase of postconflict prevention. This entails the prevention of the re-emergence of disputes by reintegrating and reconstructing the war-torn society, which includes

playing a role in peacetime diplomacy and postconflict peace building and sustained consultations and efforts aimed at the resolution of the first signs of emerging conflict and the exacerbation of tensions that could be a contributing factor to new conflict situations.

9.   BEYOND PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY - EXPANDING THE RE-SEARCH AGENDA

Preventive diplomacy has not been successfully applied in resolving conflicts in Africa, and will continue to fail, unless greater emphasis is placed on structural prevention. This includes an assessment and strategy for responding to underlying sources of conflict that frequently produce negative conflict attitudes and consequently further conflict and violence. Preventive diplomacy initiatives, when taken alone and independently of a broader strategy of conflict prevention, are likely to fail unless they are linked to measures and actions that tackle the deeper or structural causes of conflict.

In some instances parties may solely be motivated by insecurity and only seek party survival. According to this view, the only reason for parties in civil wars to fight is their fear that if they make peace and disarm, their adversary will take advantage and eliminate them. The lack of an overarching authority that can enforce a political settlement in civil war means that warring parties cannot credibly commit to making peace, either in the short term (through disarmament) or in the long term (through a constitution). Thus any party who violates or opposes a peace agreement, does so primarily out of fear.

While all conflict settlements require the mutual agreement of both sides, in some instances that agreement arises out of duress. As a result, either the settlement does not directly address the political issues in dispute or the settlement decides these issues at the expense of the weaker side. While such agreements may *settle* the conflict, they are unlikely to resolve it as they have not eliminated, and in fact may have exacerbated, the underlying issues in dispute (Miall 1992). Since grievances remain, such exploitative or incomplete agreements provide a permissive condition for the resumption of hostilities (Werner 2006:299).

It is often the nature of the experiences gained by the rivals in relation to one another, rather than the duration of rivalry *per se*, that influences the prospects for mediation success (Greig 2006:265). Rivalry policies are not easy to change either. In general, conflict tends to beget conflict. In this respect the need to consider alternative explanations for continuing conflict, characterized by intense violence and animosity, is necessary in order to bring forth remedial efforts that produce sustainable peace.

The crux of preventive diplomacy and peace building therefore is located in redressing the mobilization of tensions resulting from the underlying causes of

conflict (De Zeeuw 2001:17). The need to include social-psychological perspectives towards gaining a comprehensive understanding of conflict is therefore crucial.

Peace agreements have produced different outcomes and a strong argument can hardly be held forth that these agreements have convincingly and decisively turned the tide of conflicts that have engulfed Africa. The mixed outcome underlies a fundamental challenge that faces Africa - that is developing the capacity of African states to resolve old, current and emerging conflicts.

The postconflict phase is considered to be the phase in the life cycle of conflict when hostilities have ceased. In practice, however, tensions may flare up again and a fragile peace process may relapse into conflict (De Zeeuw 2001:11). It could therefore be asserted that preventive diplomacy may still have a potentially valuable role to play parallel with other conflict resolution initiatives.

The goal of conflict transformation is peace and the capacity to handle conflict creatively and non-violently. Visions of a sustainable outcome acceptable to all parties may transform the conflict long before any agreement. Preventive diplomacy's role in understanding, responding and transforming conflicts is therefore invaluable to the process of conflict transformation. It is also necessary to expand the role of preventive diplomacy and the potentially vast research opportunities that political psychology provides in gaining a comprehensive and alternative understanding of conflict, conflict resolution and conflict transformation that extends well beyond the ambit of this paper. What is clear is that conflict research will have to expand the ways and means of understanding the complexities of political conflict in order to prevent, manage, and avoid the relapse of violent conflicts, especially in the African environment.

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