)Brothers at War? Reflections on an Internecine Conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.
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ABSTRACT
The phenomenon of an Afro-fatigue as engendered by the tragic events in Liberia (1990), Somalia (1992) and Rwanda (1994) was salutary in so far as it intensified debates on the pivotal role assigned to the United Nations (UN) and the international community at large in African conflict resolution. Subsequently, there emerged clarion calls for African solutions to African conflicts, with foreign intervention only playing a complementary role. This new thinking put sub-regional organisations like ECOWAS in West Africa and SADC in Southern Africa in a good stead to take this initiative. So far, however, such initiatives in these and other sub-regions have been fraught with problems   most of them insurmountable.
Using the Ethio-Eritrean conflict as a point of reference, this paper argues that such innovations are hobbled by the inherent weaknesses and moribundity of key organisations as is too obviously the case throughout Africa.

1. THE CHANGING CONTEXT

Since time immemorial, the continent of Africa, just like other continents, had been continuously ruined by civil wars, inter-state wars, conventional wars and ethnic conflicts. These various endemic conflicts that occurred at different times for different reasons has led Africa to be perceived in a negative light as a dark continent of despair. The intensity of these protracted political conflicts undermines and dashes away hopes for sustainable peace.

Over the past three decades, the political conflicts in Africa resulted in humanitarian crises and refugee problems which, in turn, accelerated political instability, severe hardships and abject poverty in many African countries. As a result, the high death toll invoked serious debates about collective security in the continent of Africa as a whole.

Currently, the most urgently pressing issue at the top of African political agendas is to address civil wars that persistently threaten the prospects of peace and political stability, which are so desperately desired to attract foreign investment. The outcomes of these conflicts manifest themselves in forms of ethnic cleansing, mass genocides, gross violation of human rights as well as rampant massacres. These political conflicts are not only undesirable, but they also result in a tragic loss of human lives, population displacement, economic stagnation as well as environmental degradation. As Copson (1994:3) sharply observed:

The costs of war for Africa's people, its cultures and societies, and its economies have been immense. Indeed, measured in terms of deaths, refugees and displaced persons, and lost economic opportunities, African war is one of the greatest calamities of our era. It is also a calamity in dimensions that are more difficult to measure, including the anguish and suffering of millions, and the destruction of traditional ways of life, perhaps forever). What may be happening to traditional human societies and to wildlife in the war zones is largely a matter of speculation. And we have no way to gauge the psychic pain of the homeless, the orphans, and the destitute.

Apart from the afore-mentioned centrifugal forces, Africa was equally not immune from the centripetal forces. One of these was the peaceful end of the cold war. This event had wide ramifications. One example in the post cold war era was that bipolarity gave way to unipolarity. A notable feature of the contemporary post-cold war world is a tendency towards unilateral action by the West, with the US

maintaining its core leadership primus inter pares role. However, to the third world and indeed the rest of Africa, the most felt ramification of the thaw of the Cold war was the gradual marginalisation of the third world by the West (Bush & Szeftel 1995:295-293; Neethling 1998:27; SAPEM 1999:3; Williams 1973:134). In the light of the changes engendered by the end of the Cold War, economic considerations superseded political considerations. This re-directed the focus of the West to the developing countries in Latin America and South East Asia. The first world countries were also pre-occupied with enticing former communist countries in Eastern Europe and with containing potential conflicts in the former Soviet Union.

Since the first wave of independence in 1960, Africa had a fair share of conflicts and UN peacekeeping missions (Hanekom 1998:154; Kaure 1999:7; Regan 1996:353-357). Inevitably, the continent has become a testing ground for innovations to the internationally hatched collective security.

In 1992 the UN decided to review its strategy for conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Non-payment of contributions, coupled with the reluctance of western countries to commit their military personnel in hazardous peacekeeping operations (in Africa), made it imperative for the UN to review its grand strategy (Boutros-Ghali 1992:28, 41). Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace, the policy document on UN peacekeeping, came as a direct response to these changes. This document, inter alia, called for the partial delegation of peacekeeping duties to regional organisations (Boutros-Ghali 1992:chap 7).

To follow suit, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) adopted the Declaration of Fundamental Changes, which moved from the premise that Africa had to assume responsibility for her own affairs. Subsequently, in Cairo in 1993, the OAU adopted the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (MCPMR) (Jan 1993:13).

As it blossomed, it appeared that at the core of this new thinking was the partial delegation of conflict management roles to regional and sub-regional organisations. This was coupled with a concerted search for African solutions to African problems. This view was corroborated by Alden (1997:1) when he said:

At the same time, the difficulties experienced by the United Nations, symbolised by the debacle in Somalia, have caused the organisation to reconsider its role in conflict management. In its stead, the UN is encouraging regional and sub-regional organisations to take up the mantle of conflict management in their respective regions. In the case of Africa, the international community has identified the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as key institutions whose capacity should be expanded in the light of its own diminished capacity.

Following Ate (1999:1-6), one can also add that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was in an equally in advantageous position to be in the forefront of renewed moves towards bringing African solutions to African conflicts. However, as shown by a string of events since the Somali debacle in 1992, the recommendations of this new thinking, based on the UN's Agenda for Peace and the OAU's MCPMR are, in fact, fundamentally flawed.

Using the Ethio-Eritrean war as a point of reference, this paper will start off with a synoptic review of the origins of this conflict, to be immediately followed by an analysis of both foreign and African endeavours in managing and resolving it. In its main arguments, this paper will posit that fratricidal conflicts like the one under review here are, indeed, most intractable; that a lasting solution to this conflict hinges on the amicable resolution of the central issue a clear demarcation of disputed

boundaries between the two countries; that the political conflict in the Horn of Africa invariably retards economic development; and, lastly, that this new thinking will for some foreseeable future be hobbled as long as the regional powers are either embroiled in, or insensitive to, such raging conflicts.

Lastly, this paper will conclude that, as a matter of practicality, without fully implementing the currently innovative ideas on African conflict resolution proposed by the OAU and the UN; without taking into consideration the fratricidal dimension of this inter-state conflict; and without a substantial financial backing from the West, the newly-hatched United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) is not likely to produce the desired outcome.

2. WHY THE ETHIO-ERITREAN CONFLICT? A SYNOPTIC VIEW

2.1. The post-dergue era: A period of quietude?

Upon the ascension into power of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in May 1991, Eritrea achieved a de facto independence to be immediately followed by a de jure independence in May 1993. Rapidly enough, that same month, on May 21, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) seized power in Addis Ababa. In the wake of those dramatic events, there was so much euphoria as the common enemy   despotic Lt.Col. Mengistu Mariam   had been deposed. Another notable reason for jubilation was the anticipation that, as the protracted war was eventually over, there was even a much greater need and opportunity for the two countries to cement their cordial relations, given the long-standing working relations between the leaderships of the EPLF and the EPRDF (Henze 1993:53-61).

However, to the disappointment of the denizens of the two countries and the dismay of the proponents of African Renaissance, 1 this turned out not to be the case at all. This became evidently clear in May 1998 when a border dispute between the two brothers in arms flared up.

As alluded to above, the 1998-2000 conflagration hinged on a clear demarcation of disputed borders between the two countries. For this reason, it is imperative to shed some light on a brief history of Eritrea, the nature of its struggle and the role players thereof. Only when we know the underlying causes of this conflict can we realistically hope to come up with possible solutions to this conflict   a conflict dubbed as a "crazy" conflict by the inhabitants of the two countries and the international observers at large.

2.2. The root causes of the conflict

With regard to the history of Eritrea, one needs to note that it is intertwined with that of Ethiopia. Historical links between the two countries go as far back as the 19th century. Modern history of Eritrea, the younger of the two, dates back to 1886 when she first became an Italian colony. Later on, she was used as a springboard in Italy's dismal attempt to conquer Ethiopia in 1896. After five decades, following the defeat of the Axis powers during World War II, Eritrea became a protectorate of Great Britain in 1941. However, this arrangement was short-lived. In 1950, the UN General Assembly took a resolution ending British administration of Eritrea. Subsequently, in 1952, Eritrea became part and parcel of the Federal Union of Ethiopia. The then Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie, gradually reduced

Eritrea's autonomy, however, when he reduced her to an Ethiopian province in 1962, thus providing a land-locked Ethiopia with much needed access to Red Sea ports.

Another notable fact is that Eritrea was never pleased with the 1952 arrangement. By then, the 1948 formation of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELP) in Cairo under the leadership of Harris Awate had already taken place. Because of its determination to attain national independence, the ELP resorted to the armed struggle on September 21, 1961. In its early years, the ELP was faced with a number of formidable challenges, both external and internal, though the latter tended to be the most nagging. Notable amongst the internal challenges was a series of internal divisions within the Front. These were so intractable that they led to the breakaway from the ELP and the subsequent formation of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in June 1970 (Stevens 1981:40-43).

The formation of the EPLF was an added factor in the history of Eritrea as its primary goal was the attainment of national independence from Ethiopia. This cause immediately led to the intensification of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict. Since then, the Eritrean issue became a thorn in the flesh of Ethiopia. For example, out of Ethiopia's 14 regions, Eritrea topped the three conflict areas, the other two being the Ogaden and regions dominated by leftist and traditional groups. The intensity of the Eritrean struggle was, amongst other things, reflected in the number of guerrillas on the ground. In 1978 the ELP and EPLF, respectively, had 20 000 and 15 000 men on the ground; whereas Ethiopia had 60 000-80 000, following the end of the war with Sudan over Ogaden (Rinehart 1981:265-268).

In retrospect, equally important was the impact of the working relations between the EPLF and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) earlier on and the EPLF and EPRDF later on. Geographically, Tigray and Eritrea were the two most northern provinces of Ethiopia. Because of their propinquity, it became easy for their respective guerrilla movements   TPLF and EPLF   to join forces in their protracted struggle to overthrow the dergue regime in Addis Ababa. Apart from their proximity, there were two other compelling reasons for a close co-operation between these two movements in the 1980s. On the one hand, the Eritreans, including President Isaias Afewerki, wanted to attain their independence. On the other, the Tigrans, among them Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, realised that they were in a good stead to topple the ruling elite in Addis Ababa and remained determined to do exactly that.

Given the long-standing cordial relations between these two former allies, it still remains a near impossible task to satisfactorily give a clear account of the actual causes of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Several factors, though, have presented themselves as possible explanations.

The most plausible amongst these are the territorial factors. To recall, upon assuming power in Addis Ababa in 1991, the EPRDF, to the dismay of the EPLF, allowed the provincial government in Tigray to redefine its borders. That move then led to a rupture between the two regimes in Asmara and Addis Ababa, thus bringing to the fore a border issue which had been simmering even during the days of the struggle in the 1980s. However, that issue had always been tactically swept under the carpet for the sake of achieving the ultimate goal   the overthrow of the Mariam regime. That rupture, as will be shown hereunder, ultimately led to a war which has been fought over sections of the 990-km border between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Eritrea, on the one hand, bases her claims on the 1902 treaty between Ethiopia's King Menelik II and the Italian government, which had colonised present-day Eritrea. Ethiopia, on the

other hand, refutes such claims. The contested areas mainly are: Om Hager/Humera in the west; Badme and the Yirga triangle around Sheraro, between the Merab and the Takazze rivers; Tserona and Zalenmbessa north of Adigrat; Alitiena and Irob; Badda and the Northern Dankalia depression; and Bore on the road to Assab. The most serious clashes, though, have been in the Yirga triangle, covering 400 kms along the border around Zalembessa and Alitiena and in Bore (ROAPE 1998:511).

2.3. Other factors

Despite the primacy of territorial claims in causing this war, there are other possible factors as well and these are worth mentioning here. Pre-eminent among these are economic, political and leadership factors.

Economic factors, for one, hinged mainly around such issues as labour migration, currency, trade and its corollary   access to Red Sea ports.

With respect to labour movement, the two countries have differing, contradictory and mutually exclusive views. Ethiopia, on the one hand, was disgruntled with 500 000 Eritreans who continued to have free access to jobs in Ethiopia, at a time when a claimed 150 000 Ethiopians were immediately expelled from Eritrea during the 1991/92 period (ROAPE 1998:510-511). In a nutshell, in Ethiopia there was a general perception that the standing arrangements were skewed in favour of Eritrea as they allowed her to largely benefit at the expense of Ethiopia. Eritrea, on the other hand, was aggrieved by Ethiopia's refusal to provide any reparations; Ethiopia's border control which affected food supplies into Eritrea; and Ethiopia's importation of refined oil products at the expense of the ageing Assab refinery (ROAPE 1998:511).

Currency is another issue which drove a wedge between the two countries. As Eritrea was a newly independent state, there is no doubt that she badly needed to have her own currency and the creation of nakfa exactly fulfilled that need. That after all, would be a sign of national sovereignty. What the Eritreans overlooked, though, were the actual implications of doing so. They simplistically assumed that nakfa and Ethiopian birr would be used in both countries with an equal buying power. When Ethiopia could not acquiesce, tensions flared up.

Trade was another contentious economic issue between the two countries. The Eritreans, in particular, with their lofty idea of creating "An African Hong Kong" wanted preferential trade treatment from Ethiopia so that Eritrea could easily buy Ethiopian raw materials and flood them back in the Ethiopian market as manufactured goods. However, this plan was fundamentally flawed as it simplistically assumed that Ethiopia had neither plan nor ability to use her raw materials for her own industries. When Eritrea could not get such trade concessions from Ethiopia, she retaliated by refusing a land-locked Ethiopia her much-needed access to the Assab port.

Political factors. There are perceptions that this war is a perversion created by the leaders of the two countries in order to divert attention from the real political challenges in their respective countries. Eritrea's Afewerki is not only faced with the daunting task of reconciling the ELF and the EPLF, but is equally expected to democratise and contain potential divisions among such diverse ethnic groups as the Tigre, Baria, Biten, Saha, Kunana, Rashaida and Tigrigna. The same can be said of Ethiopia,

which is equally not immune from regional and ethnic diversity (Sotal 1999:15).

Furthermore, the role of leadership factors in fuelling this conflict cannot be overlooked. The respective African leaders   whether they are in Southern, Central, Western or Eastern Africa   try to boost their profile in international forums and platforms and ingratiate themselves with the Clinton regime in the US. In the Horn, recognition as a leader is a hotly contested and much coveted role. Each one of these two leaders would use just about every occasion and platform to shine above the other as "the leader" in that sub-region. Zenawi, for one, wants to project himself as a pacifier and a purveyor of democracy and market economy in the region.

As has already been pointed out, singling out one factor as the primary cause of this war does not help much in a quest for a lasting solution to this war. So long as the (underlying) causes of this conflict are not delved into, so long will this conflict remain dubbed as "the stupidest" of conflicts the world over. With such a negative perception around, finding a lasting solution to this conflict will always remain an elusive goal. For this specific reason, this paper has found it imperative to at least scratch the surface with a view to finding the actual causes. Though the quintessence of this approach is indubitable, this paper cannot pretend to have been exhaustive in this regard. For example, what about the role played by social factors?

3. THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES AND OUTSIDE INTERVENTION

With respect to the outbreak of hostilities, on 6 May 1998, the Eritrean army responded to an earlier bombing of the Asmara airport by bombing the Ayder School in Mikelle, the capital of Tigray province, killing about fifty civilians in the process, and went on to occupy territories in the Badme area. This and other skirmishes that ensued marked the outbreak of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998.

From the onset, peace efforts reached a stalemate: On the one hand, Ethiopia, which administered the area, said the Eritreans were the instigators and demanded their immediate and unconditional withdrawal to pre-6 May positions; on the other, Eritrea admitted it was the aggressor but insisted it was only reclaiming its own territory.

Again, after an almost 13 months lull in their fighting, Ethiopia and Eritrea, the two poorest but promising nations in Africa, went to war on 3 May, 2000, over their disputed border.

At this juncture, it is imperative to know what forms of intervention were precipitated by this war, what informed such efforts, who were involved and in what capacity, and what their successes and failures were and why. An attempt to tackle some of these poignant questions follows next.

3.1. Towards a resolution: Moulding a successful outside intervention

First and foremost, we cannot really assess outside intervention without identifying the interveners themselves. Because of a great number of interveners involved, they have been categorised here into three different groups.

Firstly, there is the UN and the OAU, whose very natures dictate that they get involved in finding an amicable solution to this conflict.

Secondly, there are interested, persistent and committed parties such as the US and Rwanda.

Thirdly, the last group comprises interveners from interested yet not so much involved parties like the EU, Netherlands, Italy and other African countries, namely, Djibouti, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, the DRC and Zimbabwe.

Naturally, the main interlocutors are the Eritrean Government led by EPLF and the EPRDF Government in Ethiopia.

With respect to a realistic assessment of outside intervention, the dramatic manner in which the hostilities between the two countries flared up focused attention on the fact that the unique nature of this conflict has presented pacifiers with a mammoth task indeed. As a pre-requisite to a resolution, policy makers therefore have to acknowledge that there is a dire need to substantially reduce the existing gap between theory and literature.

Corroborating evidence for the above is overwhelming. In fact, our rummage through the existing literature on conflict studies reveals that this is a very rich field indeed, and that there is great value that can be derived by scholars, policy makers and peace practitioners.[2] Out of this existing theoretical framework, this paper has identified some important cues pertinent to the resolution of the conflict here under review. Where necessary, these will be illuminated by citing specific examples from various peace efforts surveyed here.

In a random and non-exhaustive manner, the following have been identified as the important cues which might have relevance to the final peaceful resolution of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict.

The first one is to be open-minded, innovative and goal-driven. Doing so has practical utility. A sine qua non for this, however, is to make an accurate taxonomic analysis of peacekeeping missions. One sure way of ensuring this is by classifying various peacekeeping operations, setting specific objectives they ought to achieve and assessing whether they have enough capacity to do so. Once this has been done, it then becomes clear that unlike the traditional missions, the contemporary peacekeeping missions are much more complex in nature and invariably assume multiple roles. This view was corroborated by Diehl et al (1998:37) when they clairvoyantly pointed out that:

The new missions are more complex and explicitly committed to and involved in conflict resolution. What was formerly regarded as primarily a control function has been extended to include peacemaking and peacebuilding, both of which involve the use of conflict resolution processes or skills. These skills include negotiation, mediation, facilitation, consultation, conciliation, and communication. Although missions and situations may vary in terms of the extent to which these skills are needed, they are an important part of the modern peacekeeper's "toolbox".

In addition to alerting us to training needs, a classification of peacekeeping missions equips policy makers with logistical tools for planning. It allows them to determine whether a specific mission can fulfil specific roles simultaneously or sequentially, or for that matter, whether different roles are mutually exclusive and whether heedlessly combining them is inherently problematic. All these are critical factors that need to be carefully considered as they have a direct bearing on the likely outcome

of any peacekeeping mission.

Hanekom (1998:158) was acutely aware of this critical factor when he pointed out that the preponderance of conflict clearly indicates that there is a dire need to amend the UN Charter, particularly chapters 6 and 7, and Article XIV of the OAU Charter. Doing so, according to him, would enable these organisations to effectively deal with the current conflicts which tend to be most intractable.

Even the success of the newly-hatched UMEE hinges around this critical point. For one, the training of 4 200 peacekeepers and other observers will remain very crucial so that they can, amongst other things, alert themselves to the vagaries of the relations between the two countries under review here. Adequate training, particularly in communication, will go a long way towards levelling communication barriers among the peacekeepers themselves, as they come from 19 different countries, 3 and will also facilitate communication between peacekeepers and citizens of the two countries in conflict (Blake 1998:310-311).

Another cue, closely linked to the above, is to acknowledge a dire need to determine specific roles the interveners should play. 4 Are they mediators, merely content with dispute settlement? Or are they arbitrators, mainly interested in imposing a settlement? Or, for that matter, are they peace corps, suitably trained and versatile enough to be involved in a wide range of operations from traditional peacekeeping to post-conflict peacebuilding? Though this point has a direct bearing on the successful resolution of any conflict, the record of various peace efforts, particularly between May 1998 and April 2000, inspires little confidence. For one, outside intervention was tardy, and when it eventually came, there was no clarity on the actual form it was supposed to take. As the war broke out on May 6, the US and Rwanda were the first to intervene on May 31. Given the level of conflict   a full-scale war   their choice of intervention as facilitators was simply inadequate to deal with the situation. For this reason, it does not come as a surprise that the central element of their peace proposal   Eritrea's withdrawal to pre-May 6 positions   was firmly rejected by Eritrea hence there was a deadlock from the onset.

Apart from the US/Rwanda peace effort, other subsequent efforts by Libya, Djibouti and Italy clearly indicated the form of intervention was not thought through beforehand. Rather, each party intervened on an ad hoc basis as it saw fit.

A penultimate point is that the existing theoretical framework has been salutary in the sense that it helps policy makers determine issues in a particular conflict and discern orientations of the disputants and intervene accordingly. What issues are involved in a particular conflict? Are they tangible (like territory, resources, government positions) or intangible (like ethnic, religious, ideological differences)?

With respect to the role of such issues, this paper will guard against gullibly accepting the view that conflicts based on tangible as opposed to intangible issues are much more tractable. This circumspection is informed by the fact that this new genre of African conflicts in the post-cold war era, at times, simply gainsays such tangible motifs. For example, in regard to the impact of tangible resources, our case study reveals that though the underlying cause seems to be the violation of existing boundaries between the two countries, other factors mentioned above, like political factors, seem to exacerbate this conflict.

As for party positions, are the disputants interested in integrative bargaining, thus seeking mutually beneficial solutions to a conflict? Or are they interested in distributive bargaining, thus increasing their outcomes at the other's expense? Once those orientations have been discerned, interveners can then be in a position to determine whether a given party is rigid or flexible and to what forms of intervention are they amenable and/or impervious. Diehl et al (1998:51) equally agreed that distinguishing such party orientations has policy implications as well and went on to elaborate on this. According to them, there are two dimensions to this. On the one hand, conflicts in which parties adopt a distributive orientation require negotiating skills suitable for competitive situations. On the other, missions in which parties adopt a much more integrative orientation require such problem-solving and communication skills as searching for information that reveals underlying interests and needs, developing trust, and identifying solutions that avoid concessions. For mediators, they asserted, it is also important to generate hypotheses, diagnose and give disputants a sense of ownership of negotiating solutions.

As for the actual impact of such skills on various peace efforts, there has been a tendency to blame the failure of US/Rwanda-brokered peace talks on the ineptitude of the US chief negotiator Susan Rice. There has been a perception that she did not embark on a fact-finding mission ahead of time. Doing so, it is believed, would have alerted her to contentious issues that the belligerents were not likely to compromise. However, these allegations, which are neither here nor there, should not obscure the real issue here   that such skills play a pivotal role. It is only when mediators, for example, are equipped with problem-solving and other skills, that they can handle delicate situations as they unfold. If the tensions are too high, for example, an experienced negotiator can decide to meet the parties separately for a start, as did the Algerian President and current OAU Chairperson Abdelaziz Bouleflika during the proximity talks in April/May 2000. Though this might seem like a trivial point, it really went a long way towards building trust and reducing tensions between the warring parties, hence the 18 June 2000 breakthrough.

Lastly, current literature has taught us that the status of the intervener is equally critical to the likely outcome of any intervention attempt. This is simply because larger countries have much more latitude when it comes to organising an intervention strategy. Major powers, Regan (1996:348) further observed, not only have larger and more projectable military forces but also a wider range of economic resources that can be brought to bear in a foreign policy role such as peacekeeping. He concluded by pointing out that the effectiveness of that intervention should be greater than that of a non-major power.

History abounds with examples in which the intervention of powerful states has produced the likely outcome of peace efforts. Pre-eminent is the current involvement of the western trio   the US, Great Britain and France   in various initiatives in Africa (Ate 1999:13-16). Within Africa, there are more pertinent examples. One is South Africa's involvement under the rubric of the SADC in resolving the Lesotho crisis from 1994 to September 1998. The other, and more spectacular, has been Nigeria's involvement in the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) missions in Liberia from 1990 to 1997 and in Sierra Leone as well.

The ongoing conflict in the Horn of Africa bears testimony to the above-mentioned point as well. Notable here is the fact that this conflict has been prolonged by the absence of the UN-OAU-Sub-Regional power synergy as envisaged by the UN. This state of affairs is due to the fact a regional power in the Horn, Ethiopia, is one of the belligerents. Ethiopia's status has therefore foiled IGAD's

(Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) chances of trying to resolve this conflict. In general, compared to other sub-regional organisations, IGAD 5 is still lagging behind in this regard. Firstly, earlier mediation attempts by Djibouti President and IGAD Chair at the time, Hassan Gouled Alidan, failed to make any impact on the peace process. Secondly, subsequent attempts by individual member states equally foundered. Somalia, on the one hand, could not have been meaningfully involved in the peace process given her strained relations with Ethiopia. On the other hand, Uganda's extensive involvement in the peace process has been encumbered by her engagement in the DRC conflict. Whatever the reason, the crux of the matter is that a collective involvement of IGAD as a unit would have gone a long way towards resolving the conflict.

Another complicating factor is that even the OAU does not have enough capacity to decisively resolve this conflict. This Achilles heel of the OAU, therefore, accounts for the organisation's dithering negotiation efforts between May 1998 and April 2000. This was first shown when the OAU did not intervene promptly when the war broke out on 6 May, 1998. Its intervention was tardy, even overtaken by the US/Rwanda peace effort mentioned above, as it only took place on the 10th of June, 1999. If the OAU could not intervene promptly and decisively, which other organisation in Africa was in a good position to play that role? The Achilles heel also manifests itself in the OAU'S lack of leverage in general as it failed to convince the two warring parties to adopt its Framework Agreement Proposal on the 8th of November 1998. Furthermore, the AOU has allowed these parties to hold the peace talks at ransom. For more than two years, it could not get its peace proposal accepted by the two parties mainly on two grounds: Ethiopia's initial insistence on Eritrea's withdrawal to pre-6 May positions; and, later, on Eritrea's insistence on Ethiopia's signing of a cease-fire before any substantive talks could begin. For almost two years, the OAU just could not break that impasse!

4. WAY FORWARD

The ongoing conflict has already had catastrophic results and bequeathed both Ethiopia and Eritrea with problems of unimaginable proportions: a tragic loss of human life on a grand scale as thousands of soldiers and civilians were caught up and slain in the battlefront; a major humanitarian crisis in the turn of the century as hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians in both countries were forced to flee their homes and trudge across hundreds of miles in search of safe havens;6 and the destruction of the economies of the two countries.

The last point, which will have wider and long-lasting ramifications, needs some further elaboration. First, it needs to be unequivocally stated that this war has depleted the meagre resources in these two countries. A substantial portion of their resources, which could have been optimally used for the provision of food and other essential services, has been siphoned off for defence spending. Subsequently, such resources have been used to buy modern Russian Aircraft so that the two countries can annihilate each other. To have two of the poorest economies in the world, with acute shortages of food, staging hi-tech war in the modern history of Africa is nothing else but a remarkable folly. 7 This becomes conspicuous when it is recalled that this war has also jettisoned any plans for economic recovery in the two countries. Because of this war, reciprocal trade links (at least in the short term) have been curtailed. Doing so has not only shattered the two economies, but has also rocked the very foundation of close economic co-operation at sub-regional (IGAD) level. In a nutshell, the costs of this war are exorbitant and its further continuation is just incomprehensible. But what are the prospects for finding a lasting solution? Not bright at all!

As shown above, various peace efforts in resolving the Ethio-Eritrean conflict during the first round of this conflict inspire little confidence. Be that as it may, there are promising developments which took place after the outbreak of hostilities in May 2000. Amongst these is the resumption of Proximity Talks on May 30, 2000, in Algeria under the auspices of the OAU. These talks were a major breakthrough as they paved way for the subsequent signing of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities between the two warring countries on the 18th of June, 2000.

Given the limited success of peace efforts during the first round of this conflict, are there cogent reasons for a much more sanguine view of such endeavours in the second round? Probably there are. One of them is that the UN, in particular, has beefed up its measures by coming up with much more innovative ideas on dealing with the current multi-dimensional conflicts. Amongst these are establishing UN Committees on Peace and Security and Humanitarian Affairs to prepare and co-ordinate complex operations; establishing Contact groups of interested countries to mobilise international support for peace efforts; co-deploying with regional, sub-regional, and multinational forces; holding Annual meetings between officials from the UN and OAU Secretariats chaired by the two Secretaries-General and establishing a UN Liaison Office at the headquarters of the OAU in (ironically!) Addis Ababa to consolidate Cupertino and facilitate the deployment of political efforts to prevent, contain and resolve conflicts in Africa.8 Also, as alluded to above, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1312 (2000) of July 31, 2000, which established the formation of UNMEE.

Apart from this, there is not much reason for further optimism. One of the reasons for this jaundiced view is that the conflict under review here is complex, intractable and multi-dimensional in nature and requires a multi-pronged approach. In addition to our case study, the DRC conflict, which is essentially an ethnic intra-state conflict with a strong inter-state dimension, is highly indicative of this same phenomenon. It is upon acknowledging this reality that policy-makers can realistically hope to prescribe a decisive form of intervention. The very nature of this conflict dictates that the UN should come up with a multi-pronged approach for prevention, management and resolution of conflicts whether they are intra or inter-state in nature.

Though these innovations are a huge step towards the right direction, policy makers should guard against complacency. Such operations would be very complex in nature and invariably need enormous resources if they are to be successful. For this, continued support of the Western countries, particularly the US, Great Britain and France 9 , will be relied upon; and further financial support from potential donors such as the EU, Netherlands, Canada and others, solicited.

Without these, so will wither African Solutions to African problems; and so will wilt the high hopes of innocent civilians in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Notes

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1. This is a widely used term and its definition will not be repeated here. However, for a better

understanding if this concept see, amongst others, Statement of the NEC of the African National Congress (ANC) delivered by Thabo Mbeki on January 8, 1999, on the 87th anniversary of the ANC, p.4.

2. Notable here is the fact that in a concerted search for sustainable peace and political stability (in Africa), scholars, particularly those who specialise in the area of political conflict studies, have propounded various conflict theories for the currently prevalent political conflicts. For implications of these, see, for example, Bozeman (1976:41-45), Deutsch (1991:26), Pederson and Jandt (1996:3-4), and Zartman (1989:12-17). For additional yet crucial information on conflict and conflict resolution, also see, inter alia, Vayrynen (1990:1-5) on the role of actor, issue, structural as well as rule transformation; Regan (1996:338-40, 343-352) on third-party intervention in intrastate conflicts since 1994; Malan (1997:16, 92-96) on the significance and nature of conflict resolution wisdom from Africa; and Blake (1998:310) on the role of peace communication in conflict resolution endeavours in Africa.

3. Among the countries which pledged to contribute troops were Algeria, Canada, Kenya, Sweden and Zambia. For the whole list, visit http://www.reliefweb.int/IRN/cea/contrystories/ethiopia/20000901a.phtml

4. Equally important is to understand the nuances between conflict management and conflict resolution. Zartman (1989:8) might be helpful in this regard.

5. For a brief introduction to IGAD, formerly known as the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD), see Salem (1992:15).

6. In his recent report on Ethiopia and Eritrea, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has given graphic details of the humanitarian crises in both countries. For example, in Ethiopia, he reported that by January 2000, an estimated 349 837 people had been displaced by war in the northern regions of Tigray and Afor alone; whereas 10 million people, including 1.4 million children under five years of age, have been left in a dire need for food. This desperate situation has been exacerbated by drought, he added. In Eritrea the situation was equally desperate, with 400 000 people displaced and 1.6 million affected by drought and war. For additional information on this and amounts required for emergency relief assistance, visit http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsb/48 or http://www.un.org

7. As Sotal (1999:15) pointed out, this perception can also be attributed to the fratricidal dimension of this conflict. Close affinity between the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea is reflected in the fact that the Tigri people, who live on both sides of the borders, have known one another for centuries. They speak the same language, worship together and have developed and strengthened family ties. In fact, this is a conflict which has split families and, as it did to Afewerki and Zenawi, brought cousin against cousin.

8. In a recent report to the Security Council, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has come up with a number of innovations in addressing African conflict. For more information on these, visit http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/sgreport/innovat.html

9. Ate (1999:15) has well documented the peacekeeping initiatives of this trio in Africa. The US, for example, is primarily responsible for initiating the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI); France, the

Reinforcement of African Capacity for Peacekeeping (RECAMP); and UK, the African Peacekeeping Training Support Programme.

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