

**“THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PREVENT:  
FROM IDENTIFICATION TO IMPLEMENTATION”**

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## Background

In his report to the UN General Assembly in 2000, Secretary-General Kofi Annan called upon the world body to devise methods for responding “to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica, to gross and systematic violations of human rights that affect every precept of our common humanity” (UN, 2000: 5). Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien took up the challenge and announced in September of 2000 that his government was creating an independent International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). One year later, a blue-ribbon panel comprised of academics and practitioners from eleven countries produced a report entitled *The Responsibility to Protect*. “R2P,” as the report and the principle on which it was based came to be called, turned on its head the question of when international interventions within sovereign states might be justified. The traditional focus had been on “*when is it permissible for the international community to undertake interventions in crisis situations,*” whereas it should, in the Commission’s view, be on “*when, and how, should the international community act to exercise its responsibility to protect suffering innocents*” (Sidahmed et al., 2010: 12, italics in the original). As argued by the ICISS:

Where a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, *the principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect* (ICISS, 2001:XI, italics added).

The report contended that the Responsibility to Protect comprised three elements: a Responsibility to *Prevent*, a Responsibility to *React*, and a Responsibility to *Rebuild*. Thus the onus was on the global community to address the root causes of situations which might lead to populations being put at risk, to take action to mitigate damage when efforts at prevention failed, and to assist with “recovery, reconstruction, and reconciliation” following any such action (ICISS, 2001: 39-40). Of the three responsibilities, the Commission identified the Responsibility to Prevent as the most important, arguing that “prevention options should always be exhausted before intervention is contemplated and resources must be devoted to it” (ICISS, 2001: XI). In spite of its importance, the responsibility to prevent has received nowhere near the attention focused on the responsibility to react, an imbalance which this paper seeks to redress.

The Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has provided a useful definition of conflict prevention:

actions undertaken to reduce tensions and to prevent the outbreak or recurrence of violent conflict. Beyond short term actions, it includes the notion of long-term engagement. It consists of *operational prevention*, i.e. immediate measures applicable in the face of crisis, and *structural prevention*, i.e. measures to ensure that crises do not arise in the first place, or, if they do, that they do not recur (OECD, 2008: Annex 1, 56, italics in the original).

The ICISS report gave top priority to conflict prevention, and, as Sebastian von Einsiedel has pointed out, effective strategies for accomplishing that goal depend on two factors. The first of these is the *identification of cases* where and when humanitarian crises are likely erupt, and, following that, the *selection and implementation of appropriate techniques of remediation*

(2005). While conceptually clear, as the following discussion reveals, neither of these tasks has proven easy to carry out.

### **Problems of Identification and Timing**

The identification of impending crises through social science research was addressed in 1994 by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) through a “State Failure Task Force” created to understand the “causal structure” underlying political instability by developing “methods of risk assessment and early warning systems in the hope that foreign aid could be directed to prevent states from failing” (King and Zeng, 2001: 623). An exhaustive data set of social, political and economic indicators was to be compiled from non-classified sources in order to “assess and explain the vulnerability of states around the world to political instability and state failure” (PITF, 2010, Jan. 19).<sup>1</sup>

In that there were at the time only a dozen or so cases of “complete collapses of state authority” (too few to permit statistical analysis), the Task Force initially decided to include within its data collection protocol “revolutionary and ethnic conflicts, regime crises, and massive human rights violations that are *typically associated with state breakdown*” (Esty et al., 1998, italics added). This resulted in a data set composed of 243 cases: 40 *revolutionary wars*, 75 *ethnic wars*, 46 *genocides and politicides* and 82 *adverse or disruptive regime transition*. These were subsequently reduced to 113 “consolidated cases” that were compared against three times as many “control cases” where the problem conditions associated with violence and state failure were absent (Esty et al., 1998).

The Task Force collected data on 617 measures of demographic, social, political and economic/environmental factors. In subsequent analysis these were reduced to 75 “high priority variables,” of which 32 showed statistically significant differences between violence-challenged states and those in the more fortunate control group. Ultimately three variables (“openness to international trade, infant mortality, and democracy”) predicted with 70 percent accuracy “which states would fail between 1955 and mid-1994” (Esty et al., 1998).<sup>2</sup>

The respected periodical *Foreign Policy* has also measured the extent of state weakness based on data collected for twelve *stress-causing* factors: demographic pressures, refugees and internally displaced persons, group grievances, human flight, uneven development, economic decline, delegitimization of the state, condition of public services, human rights, security apparatus, factionalized elites and external intervention. Analysis of the resulting data set produced a “Failed States Index,” which in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century pointed to the remarkable stability of political instability. Over the five year period from 2007 to 2011 either seven or eight of the highest ranking states on the index of state failure were located in sub-Saharan Africa, with Somalia, Sudan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe and the Central African Republic making the top ten in every year, with Somalia heading the list from 2008 through 2011. Cote d’Ivoire and Guinea made three of the five top ten lists as well. (*Foreign Policy*, 2011).

What is also significant about this list is that while many of these states did in fact experience significant violence, not all did—Zimbabwe being a notable case in point. This brings to mind the 1995 observations of I. William Zartman, as well as the more recent ones of Gary King and Langche Zeng. Zartman argued that the defining characteristic of state failure or state collapse is a long-term decline of the ability to govern effectively (1995: 1-8). King and Zeng,

among others, rightly point out that while state failure and large-scale violence are often correlated, they are not necessarily the same, as the CIA Task Force's choice of its dependent variable would tend to suggest (2001: 654-655). First, violence can be either a *cause* of or a *consequence* of state collapse. Second, states can in fact continue to exist in a "state of failure" for significant periods of time without the eruption of devastating violence or complete collapse. Arguably more important, significant internal violence, as in civil war or efforts of one group to exterminate another, does not necessarily imply state failure, as the case of the 1994 Rwandan genocide so brutally demonstrated. It took remarkable government-directed organization to orchestrate the killing of some 800,000 people in a matter of twelve weeks (von Einsiedel, 2005: 24).

Compilations of data like those of the Task Force and *Foreign Policy* are without doubt helpful. They provide a better understanding of the problems underlying state failure (i.e. their *causal structure*), thus pointing to situations in need of long-term preventive measures, as well as flagging the need for the application of short-term stabilization measures in deteriorating situations before they reach the point of disintegration. The latter is in fact quite important, for as von Einsiedel argues, "the more state institutions have eroded and the more a state is overwhelmed by chaos, the less the outside world can intervene effectively" (2005: 22).

Useful as they might be, the approaches noted above are not, and perhaps can never be, conclusive: they cannot predict with certainty which unstable situation will result in either the collapse of state authority or the outbreak of violence within a state. Some have suggested that for such a purpose "triggers" and "accelerators" must be identified, but again, as von Einsiedel has pointed out, on this dimension too "knowledge is scant, and more research is clearly needed" (2005: 24). Indeed we need look no further than to the unlikely and completely unpredictable trigger for 2011 "Arab Spring" to demonstrate that even the most sophisticated models or compilations of indicators are unlikely to prove very productive in predicting when and for what reason violence will erupt.<sup>3</sup>

In truth, however, in determining the need for a preventative response, governments seldom, if ever, are dependent on academics (or for that matter the press or outside agencies) to alert them to impending problems as these are generally well known. Rebecca Hamilton has argued the crucial variable is *how* governments respond to these problems (2011: 193-205), and their response is in large part dependent on the range of effective tools at their disposal (see Allison and Zelikow, 1999: chapter 3). The remainder of the paper will assess the effectiveness of some of the major conflict-preventing strategies available to the international community.

### **Techniques of Conflict Prevention**

In spite of "a clear understanding of when and where ... [state failure] ... would occur and the availability of forecasts predicting and explaining their causes and manifestations," David Carment concluded that "the international community's track record ... to anticipate and respond is not good." Specifically, he cites the Congo, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone as cases of failure to prevent state collapse (2003: 408). Focusing attention specifically on conflict prevention, and following the OECD definition, it is useful to distinguish between *long-term* "structural strategies" (those appropriate to deal with the "root causes" of conflict and state failure) and *short-term* "operational measures" designed to respond to signs of an imminent humanitarian crisis or state collapse. In this context, we will assess the effectiveness of four important measures: in the case of long-term strategies, *development aid* and *capacity building*,

and for short-term measures, *diplomatic initiatives* and *rapid deployment of peacekeeping forces* to stabilize volatile situations. It was a combination of these two short-term strategies that the Obama administration used to deal with the prevention of violence related to the independence of South Sudan in 2011, and their effectiveness will be evaluated.

### **Long-term, Structural Measures**

Long-term approaches to conflict prevention are aimed at making fundamental changes to conflict-prone societies in such basic areas as culture, politics and economics (see Goodhand and Hulme, 1999). As Michael Brown and Chantal de Jonge Oudraat have pointed out, success of long-term measures depends on *cooperation*, and this cooperation must exist on the part of the recipient government involved (to implement so-called “top-down” strategies), as well as by the various parties to the conflict at the local level in order to put into practice what Séverine Autesserre (2010) has termed “bottom up” strategies. This *cooperation caveat* is crucial to understanding of what appear to be clear limits to long-term strategies to deal with structural problems, especially in deeply dysfunctional societies.

**Development Aid-** Jonathan Glennie explains that “development aid seeks to make a difference in the short, medium and long term, fostering economic growth and reducing poverty.” Foreign aid focuses on improving conditions in areas such as healthcare and education, as well as infrastructure through “large development projects such as hydroelectric dams and oil pipelines” (2008: 16). Indeed, since the end of WWII, “systematic aid ... government-to-government transfers ... or transfer[s] via institutions such as the World Bank” have ranked among the most popular strategies employed by the West to address the problem of poverty (Moyo, 2009: 7). Partly on the assumption that there is a strong correlation between societal poverty and political violence and/or state failure, Sub-Saharan Africa has been of particular concern, since the percentage of the population there living on an income of \$1.25 per day stands at 50.9, while that at \$2.00 per day or less stands at 72.9 (World Bank, 2011; see also UNDP, 2011).

While overall the achievements of development aid have been significant, there are problems with the sub-set of states that are of specific concern to us. In terms of dealing with state failure, Sebastian Mallaby explains the challenge:

For decades, the aid intelligencia was certain it had the solution to chaos. ... But no magic key has yet been found. An obstinate group of dysfunctional countries has refused to respond to these approaches. ... This is not to say that aid has failed. Since 1960, life expectancy in poor countries has risen from 45 to 64 years. The global illiteracy rate has fallen from 47 to 25 percent over the last three decades. And the number of poor people has fallen by about 200 million in the last two decades—a time when the world population has increased by 1.6 billion. Development institutions deserve more credit that they get. ... *But donors must face up to their inability to shake the most dysfunctional countries out of poverty, especially in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa.* (2002: 3, italics added).

Nearly a decade earlier, Gerald Helman and Steven Ratner had come to the same conclusion:

“Unfortunately ... [strategies of providing aid] ... have met with scant success in failing states, and they will prove wholly inadequate in those that have collapsed. Western aid cannot reach its intended recipients because of violence, irreconcilable political divisions, or the absence of an economic infrastructure” (1993: 7).

Developments over the past decade present us with a paradox. Beginning with Millennium Development Goals in 2000, plus such efforts as the 2005 “Make Poverty History Campaign” and Bob Geldof’s “Live 8 Concerts,” the need for greater amounts of aid were popularized, especially for sub-Saharan Africa (see Live 8, 2005; Glennie, 2008: 115-120; Moyo, 2009: 26-27). At the same time, researchers were arguing that aid was not only ineffective in dealing with issues of poverty on the African continent, but may actually be contributing to problems.

Deborah Bräutigam and Stephen Knack examined the impact of aid on “poor governance” over the period 1982-1997 and their findings, based on *International Country Risk Guide* data, showed “that in Africa, higher aid levels are associated with larger declines in the quality of governance and in tax revenues as a share of GDP” (2004: 266). They identify “aid dependence” as a primary factor contributing to these problems and suggest that in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, “continued over long periods of time, large amounts of aid and the way it is delivered make it more difficult for good governance to develop” (2004: 255-256). They cite, for example, African Development Bank statistics showing that in 1999 “27 sub-Saharan countries receiv[ed] at least 25% of net aid as a percentage of government expenditures. ... Seventeen of these countries receiv[ed] net aid equivalent to more than half of all government expenditures” (2004: 257). They do not go as far as suggesting an end to aid programs, but argue that “aid needs to be delivered more selectively and in ways that reinforce a virtuous cycle of development rather than contributing to a vicious cycle of poor governance and economic decline” (2004: 256).

More recent studies support these findings. Jonathan Glennie, while acknowledging that “government-to-government aid will always have an important supporting role to play ... [claims it] ... is becoming increasingly clear ... that dependency on aid from foreign donors has undermined the development of the *basic institutions* needed to govern and the vital link of accountability between state and citizen” (2008: 3, 5-6, italics in the original). He argues that “Africa needs less and better aid” (2008: 101). Dambisa Moyo’s much cited book, *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is A Better Way for Africa*, takes the case against aid a step further, asking the question “has more than US \$1 trillion in development assistance over the last several decades made African people better off?” Her answer was an emphatic “No. In fact, across the globe the recipients of this aid are worse off; much worse off. Yet aid remains a centerpiece of today’s development policy and one of the biggest ideas of our time” (2009; xix). Moyo concludes that “at the end of it all, it is virtually impossible to draw on Africa’s aid-led development experiment and argue that aid has worked” (2008: 27). The significance of these findings for the responsibility to prevent is that a strategy that experienced considerable success in other areas of the globe is increasingly seen as either ineffective or counter-productive, especially when applied to sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>4</sup> We do need to consider, however, the possibility that those countries would have been even worse off without aid.

**Capacity Building-** Merilee Grindle and Mary Hilderbrand define *capacity* as “the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently and sustainably ... [while] ... *capacity*

*building* refers to improvements in the ability of public sector organizations, either singly or in cooperation with other organizations, to perform appropriate tasks” (1995: 445, italics added). Capacity building strategies are therefore focused on the need to strengthen “the foundation” that underlies development. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP),

Put simply, [capacity building] is about the ‘capable institution’ that is able to better serve its mandate. ... [It] ... is a process of transformation of leaders and managers, communities and organizations from the inside, based on nationally determined priorities and desired results. *It can be facilitated and supported, but cannot be driven from the outside* (UNDP, 2009: 2, italics added).

In evaluating capacity building specifically as a tool of conflict prevention, it is widely recognized that “development” of any kind does not occur in the midst of wide-spread societal insecurity. Edmond Keller, for example, has argued that

African leaders have increasingly come to feel that the security, stability and development of every African country affects every other African country, and Africa cannot hope to make progress toward development or democracy without creating the conditions and institutions necessary for lasting solutions to problems of security and instability (2002: 10).

In choosing strategies of prevention we are concerned primarily with countries that are known to be conflict-prone, therefore “Security Sector Reform” (SSR) (improvements in the capacity of institutions such as the armed forces, intelligence services, police, judiciary and prisons), has emerged as top priority programs on the part of the international community (on SSR see USAID, 2009).

David Beer, a Royal Canadian Mounted Police Officer involved in implementing a capacity building project for Haiti’s police force in the mid 1990s, has described some the difficulties encountered. The project in question was a UN-American-Canadian-French-Haitian initiative to reform Haiti’s security sector, carried out under the auspices of the U.S. International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP).

Beer pointed out that in 1994, following the removal of the de facto military government in power after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide’s ouster in 1991, Haiti was an excellent candidate for SSR in that it “offered an environment generally free of violence in which to conduct development activities. ... [Additionally, there was] ... no shortage of human or financial resources available for development, and the justice sector received particular attention” (2001: 2-3). In spite of these highly favourable circumstances, at the project’s end Beer concluded that “the human rights situation, a principal factor in the international intervention throughout ... [the decade of the 1990s,] ... had not improved significantly” (2001: 68).

He cited a host of problems both at the donor level and on the part of the recipient state. Regarding the former, there was a lack of consensus on common goals and a failure to deal comprehensively with all components of the justice system (police, judiciary and prisons). In Beer’s judgment, “what should have been an ‘international effort’ soon developed into a series of poorly integrated independent programs” (2001: 35).

With respect to the behaviour of the recipient state, Beer pointed out that the “notion of partnership included a committed and responsive recipient state working with the international community in collective relationships with common goals of conflict prevention” (2001: 2). Unfortunately, there was a serious lack of commitment to SSR on the part of the Haitian government. As a result there was little “sustainability” of seemingly successful programs that had been initiated. For example, Beer noted that a training facility was built, furnished and opened, but never used, because the Haitian government refused to pay the salaries of those who were to run it. Egregious as well was a refusal to pay for film to be used in the photography of crime scenes and for motor oil needed to maintain vehicles donated to the police force by international donors. He concluded “there was perhaps no factor more singularly important to limiting the success of development than the failure of the Haitian government to accept responsibility for, and contribute fully to its own development and its avoidance of a leadership role” (2001: 72-73).<sup>5</sup> There is little doubt that problems of this kind are multiplied many times in situations where lack of capacity is exacerbated by on-going violence.<sup>6</sup>

### **Short-Term Operational Measures**

**Preventive Diplomacy-** Diplomacy has been seen traditionally as a set of measures (both positive and negative) whereby one state attempts to alter the behaviour of another; the end goal being either the pursuit or abandonment of a given policy. Traditionally diplomacy has been portrayed as “a state tool of war by other means,” but Stuart Murray maintains that this view is archaic and argues that diplomacy should be seen “as *the business of multi-actor peace* and not only the handmaiden of the occasionally belligerent state” (nd: 1, italics added). Short-term diplomatic initiatives to avert conflict include the passing of UN Security Council Resolutions, the dispatch of fact-finding or observer missions to the scene of a conflict and the offer of “rewards” for state behaviour seen to contribute to bringing violence under control.

Of course one of the problems involved in evaluating the effectiveness of diplomacy as a tool of conflict prevention is that much diplomatic activity is done “behind the scenes,” more or less out of the eye of the press and the public (Soderlund et al., 2012: 145). For example, in his 2012 book, Andrew Natsios revealed that prior to the end of March 2004, President Bush had made 11 phone calls to Sudan’s President Omar al-Bashir pressing him on negotiations to end the long-running civil war (2012: 157-158). The reality is that “successes” are often times not acknowledged—it is after all hard to measure impact of diplomacy on crises that were averted because of timely action; on the other hand, “failures” are all too readily apparent.

Counted among short-term diplomatic successes in the area of conflict prevention is Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s mission to Kenya in early 2008, which was instrumental in constructing a power sharing agreement which curbed the ethnic violence following a disputed election in December 2007 (Murithi, 2009: 97). As well, UN and international actions pressured Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe to agree to a transitional government in 2009 (Howard-Hassmann, 2010; International Crisis Group, 2010). Among prominent failures were similar efforts in 1993 to end the Rwandan civil war, which many see as leading directly to the 1994 genocide (Soderlund et al., 2008: chapter 5), the negotiations to end the Kosovo crisis in 1998-1999, and efforts in 2012 on the part of the Arab League and the UN to curb violence in Syria, which had to be abandoned due to the persistence of violence.

In spite of uncertain results, we have argued that when diplomatic failure occurs it usually is not due to “a lack of commitment on the part of the international community,” but



rather to the complex nature of the task at hand (Soderlund et al., 2012: 146). Thus in no way do we suggest that short-term diplomatic initiatives are either useless or should not be attempted, but rather point out that some conflicts defy easy solutions, outcomes are uncertain and it is unrealistic to expect too much.

**Rapid Deployment of UN-mandated Peace Stabilization Missions-** The UN Charter (Chapter VII, Article 43) envisioned that member states would provide the Security Council with “armed forces, assistance and facilities ... necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security” (UN, 1945). Early on, the UN’s Military Staff Committee addressed the issue of a standing force and, “at least in theory,” achieved agreement regarding the desirability of creating one. There were, however, “significant disagreements among the Permanent Five about the size, composition, and basing arrangements of national contributions ... [and as a result] ... the whole enterprise was abandoned” (Roberts, 2008: 100).

As UN peacekeeping evolved from dealing primarily with interstate conflict to far more complex cases involving the *human security* of persons living within the borders of sovereign states, the need for some sort of standing force, capable of being deployed to an emerging conflict site on short notice, became an even more urgent priority. Successes among UN operations of this type are seen in the Australian-led force “INTERFET” into East Timor in 1999 (Soderlund et al. 2008: Chapter 11) and the French-led “Operation Artemis” into the Congo’s Ituri region in the spring of 2003 (Soderlund et al., 2012: 95-96). Notable failures include the French intervention, “Operation Turquoise,” ostensibly deployed to deal with the Rwandan genocide in the summer of 1994, but ending up mainly offering protection to fleeing Hutu *génocidaires* (Soderlund et al., 2008: Chapter 8).

In her critique of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, Rebecca Hamilton has argued that along with the lack of “political will” and the question of who has the power to authorize a humanitarian mission, one of the main problems associated with R2P has been *a lack of operational capability* (2006: 294). We will briefly review two organizational structures that have been advanced to deal with the UN’s need for a Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC)—a Western-led Rapid Reaction Force and an African Standby Force.

**A Western-led Rapid Reaction Force - (SHIRBRIG)-** In 1996, in response to a Danish initiative, a Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) was formed by seven nations (Austria, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden). In 2008, the year prior to the organization’s termination, SHIRBRIG counted 23 states in various categories of membership (Koops and Varwick, 2008: Table 3, 14-15). As described by Joachim Koops and Johannes Varwick, a multinational brigade of a maximum of 4,000 to 5,000 troops would be “dedicated to rapid deployment (within 15-30 days of approval) for UN Peace Operations ... [and was to be] ... self-sustainable in theatre for up to 60 days. ... [It was] ... to be deployed for not longer than six months, allowing regular long-term UN units to form and succeed the brigade.” SHIRBRIG was never intended to be “a formal organ of the UN System,” but was developed in coordination with the UN’s Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) which was its only client (2008: 6). In theory it should have provided the needed capacity to move quickly into an area of developing crisis and stabilize the situation. In 2003, Peter Langille and Tania Keefe referred to SHIRBRIG as “the most advanced multinational mechanism for UN peace operations to date” (as quoted in Koops and Varwick, 2008: 7).

However, for a variety of reasons SHIRBRIG failed to live up to expectations. Its principal success was its first deployment, a Chapter VI peace monitoring mission to Ethiopia-Eritrea (UNMEE) in 2000, when it responded with 1,200 to 1,500 personnel.<sup>7</sup> But this was the closest it ever came to “full-brigade deployment,” largely because when it came to delivering troops supposedly committed to the endeavour, states failed to follow through (SHIRBRIG, 2009: 15). The relationship between SHIRBRIG and DPKO became increasingly dysfunctional. By 2006 “it became increasingly clear ... that the organization’s cumbersome decision-making process as well as the persistent absence of resources and political will [had] undermined SHIRBRIG’s overall effectiveness” (SHIRBRIG, 2009: 8). The organization was terminated in 2009.

***An African Standby Force - (ASF)*** Edmond Keller has offered a bleak assessment of peacekeeping operations under the sponsorship of Africa’s first pan-continent organization, the Organization of African Unity (OAU):

The OAU has from time to time been willing to try and engage in peacekeeping in domestic conflicts that have become regionalized, but it has not had the wherewithal to do so effectively. Such was the case in the first major peacekeeping effort in Chad in 1981-82. It was under financed and plagued by logistical problems. Most recently, the OAU has more or less stood helplessly on the sidelines as the conflict in the DRC has further conflagrated, drawing in neighboring states such as Namibia, Zimbabwe and Angola in support of the Kabila government, and Rwanda and Uganda in support of rebel opposition groups (2002: 10; see also Mays 2002).

In fact, following the problem-filled mission in Chad, during its lifetime the OAU demonstrated little interest in getting involved in peacekeeping operations.

**Peacekeeping under the AU-** Yvonne Kasumba and Charles Debrah have pointed out that “the OAU was not carved out to manage the complex security threats and the international concern for human rights and good governance that faced the continent after the Cold War.” However, they note its replacement, the African Union (AU), had a different focus—namely “the achievement of peace and security in Africa” (2010: 11). In pursuit of this mandate, as early as 2003 the AU began to consider its peacekeeping options, especially the development of an African Standby Force (Cilliers, 2008: 1). Such an initiative followed recommendations contained in the 2000 Brahimi report which suggested that “a brigade (approximately 5,000 troops) is what is required to effectively deter or deal with spoilers of a peace process. ... [Moreover] ... the military component of that peace operation ought to deploy as a brigade formation. It should not deploy as a collection of battalions that are unfamiliar with one another’s doctrine, leadership and operational practices” (Kent and Malan, 2003: 72).

A protocol for the establishment of an AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) “came into force in December 2003,” and following this, Jakkie Cilliers notes that planning began for

five standby level forces, one in each of Africa’s five regions ... [East, West, Central, South and North] ... supported by civilian police ... and other capacities. ... The ASF [was] intended for rapid deployment for a multiplicity of peace support operations that

may include, inter alia, *preventive deployment*, peacekeeping, peace building, post conflict disarmament, demobilization, re-integrations and humanitarian assistance” (2008: 1, italics added).

Each of six deployment scenarios had its own reaction time, with that for “preventive deployment missions” set at 30 days (2008: 3-4).<sup>8</sup>

While the term African Standby Force is frequently used in the literature, there are in fact five distinct standby forces, and, importantly, these are at different stages of development and have different structures. Kasumba and Debrah report as well that some regions are lagging “far behind” others: “There are resource disparities amongst the different regions, both in financial and human resource terms – all owing to inherent peculiarities in the political and economic backgrounds of the different regions. Different regions have also opted to adopt varying forms in terms of standby forces” (2010: 14).

While Tim Murithi contends that the ASF “will effectively project the responsibility to react” (2009: 93), it is not clear where the overall ASF concept stands in terms of operational readiness. As of 2010, Kasumba and Debrah noted that “a lot of good progress” had been made, but they also pointed to a number of factors working against “the ASF achieving its initial operational capability by 2010” (2010: 16). Serious by any standard of evaluation was an

apparent lack of conceptual buy-in by the relevant stakeholders. ... Without conceptual and political buy-in, the ability to achieve the ambitious vision of the ASF will be severely weakened. ... National-level support is particularly important as, without it, the ASF – and indeed, the entire [African Peace and Security Architecture] – will likely not be able to succeed (2010: 17).

They also note as problematic “a high degree of dependence by the AU on external partners for logistics and general service support management capabilities. ... [As was the case in Chad] ... if the AU is reliant on unpredictable funding sources there is danger that, when required, essential capabilities may not be available” (Kasumba and Debrah, 2010: 18-19).

### **The Responsibility to Prevent: The Case of South Sudan’s Independence**

Preventive diplomacy is useful mainly in “top-down” strategies attempting to influence the behaviour of governments. In the case of South Sudan, the strategy of choice followed by the Obama administration during the period leading up to the January 2011 referendum and the July Declaration of Independence, was the potentially contentious one of “engagement” with the widely discredited President of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, who was under indictment by the International Criminal Court for genocide and crimes against humanity for his actions in Darfur. Interestingly, what in fact constituted a fairly striking policy shift on the part of the American president, elicited almost no negative comment in the press or by his political opponents.

Nevertheless, the Obama administration’s policy was crafted in a climate of internal tensions. Into the policy mix, a priority on the situation in Darfur (which had been the focus of massive citizen mobilization beginning in 2004), pressing for President al-Bashir to be held accountable at the ICC for genocide, was pitted against the need to bring the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) process to fruition, with the independence of South Sudan seen as the final chapter in ending the civil war.

*In Fighting for Darfur: Public Action and the Struggle to Stop Genocide* Rebecca

Hamilton detailed the growing disillusionment among Darfur activists with the new president's approach, championed by his newly appointed Special Envoy to Sudan, General Scott Gration. Shortly after Obama took office, a review of Sudan policy was undertaken. In that one of the co-chairs was Samantha Power, author of *"A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide"* (2002), and who served as the administration's "senior director of Multilateral Affairs," not surprisingly, the expectation was "that they would soon be getting a new—tougher—policy towards Khartoum" (Hamilton, 2011: 180-181). However, General Gration proved to be a stumbling block as his "belief was that al-Bashir, and al-Bashir alone, could ensure the referendum went forward. This meant that the United States had no option but to work with his regime" (2011: 182). The resulting policy of engaging al-Bashir meant that the still unresolved Darfur issues placed lower on the administration's list of priorities than the successful conclusion of the CPA.

The Sudan policy review was released on October 19, 2009, and was described by Hamilton as reflecting

the genuine disagreement between those aligned with Susan Rice, who believed that Khartoum's behavior was best influenced by sticks, and those aligned with Gration, who believed that carrots were the only way forward, and of a president who, in the face of these disputes, chose not to force the review to a conclusion at an earlier point. ... [In the end] ... the review stated that Darfur, the CPA, and counterterrorism cooperation were three co-equal priorities on Sudan and that a mix of pressures and incentives would be used to get progress on all three objectives (2011: 185).

In the final analysis, perhaps most important to the decision to use positive diplomatic incentives in an attempt to influence al-Bashir's behaviour was that "the United States had already reached close to the maximum of unilateral pressure it could apply, *short of military action*. ... The consequence was that Gration's all-carrot approach became the policy enacted by default." As explained by a critical Hamilton, "the U.S. government's Sudan policy under Obama in 2010 reverted to what the Bush administration's policy had been in 2003: Darfur was again sidelined in the service of the north-south problem" (Hamilton, 2011: 189, italics added).

When violence broke out in Abyei, Blue Nile and South Kordofan in May 2011, less than two months prior to the date set for independence, the U.S. policy of engagement was finally challenged. However, despite the appearance in the press of significant (but limited) counter-framing, the strategy of intensified positive diplomacy remained the policy of choice to deal with these new and significant problems. The diplomatic approach appeared to be successful, at least in the short term. With the help of AU mediation, an agreement by both sides to have 4,000 Ethiopian peacekeepers deployed defused the immediate crisis in Abyei and independence was achieved in early July 2011 without major incident.<sup>9</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Conflict prevention (employing both long and short-term strategies), while recognized by the ICISS as the most desirable R2P strategy, has at best achieved limited results. In spite of knowing the problems associated with state failure, as well as knowing where these problems are congregated, we concur with David Carment's assessment that the overall record of success in preventing state failure and associated violence has been less than satisfactory (2003: 408). The

OEDC agrees, arguing that “a clear need for *a better strategic policy framework for conflict prevention and peacebuilding* work has been demonstrated” (2008: 10, emphasis in the original).

Edmond Keller evaluates conflict prevention as having achieved “mixed results.” And, with respect specifically to “the most severe cases of ethnically and culturally based conflict in Africa” (Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), he concludes that “constructing peace is a multifaceted process ... that works best when ... [intervention by regional and international organizations] ... *pre-empts the eruption of ethnically or culturally based conflicts*” (2002: 12, italics added).

This of course places the emphasis on short-term operational measures. While programs of long-term structural reform of varying types certainly need to remain in play, it is hard for international organizations to implement change in societies in which change is not embraced. On this point we must acknowledge the reality that very often entrenched domestic elites resist programs that are perceived to fundamentally undermine their dominant political or economic positions in society. In short, when needed most, the level of cooperation required for the success of long-term projects is very likely to be in short supply. Just as critical, development aid (now widely argued to be ineffective if not counter-productive when applied to the most dysfunctional societies), and involves long-term projects that are especially difficult to carry out in situations where active conflict is already raging. Thus, in addition to having the UN and the international community committed to achieving diplomatic solutions, the most pressing need in conflict prevention is to have the operational capacity to deploy “stabilization forces” into conflict situations at a point early enough to contain violence before it reaches critical levels where (as in Somalia and eastern Congo and perhaps Darfur), it becomes a way of life.

Over a dozen years ago Eric Berman and Katie Sams noted that “the challenges to African peace and security defy simple solutions” (2000: 28), and nothing that has happened in the interim would lead us to challenge this assessment. While research suggests that similar causal structures underlie a number of conflicts in the region, this is not to say that they all can (or should be) handled in a similar fashion—political circumstances (both domestic and international) are bound to be different and this affects what can be done, when, and by whom. However, regardless of which strategy is ultimately employed, Rebecca Hamilton’s observation that “*the effectiveness of any action will often depend upon early engagement*” is of pressing impact as all too often delay makes “the situation on the ground ... much more complex” (2011: 202, italics added).

On paper SHIRBRIG presented a near ideal RDC model, but one that in practice didn’t work; nor is it reassuring that at least some of the African Standby Forces are built on the failed SHIRBRIG model. Thus by default, the ad hoc, Western “lead nation” model (with the lead nation having troop, command, communications and air transport assets) appears to offer the best chance for success of early conflict prevention/peace stabilization missions. However, if a 4,000 to 5,000 member “African Standby Force” (supplied with predictable Western financial and logistical support) can be organized, trained and be ready to deploy within a matter of weeks (as happened with the Ethiopian peacekeepers sent to Abyei in the spring of 2011 to augment diplomatic efforts), this could prove to be a very useful option for R2P conflict prevention.

## Notes

1. The data set and reports written by the Task Force, which in 2003 was renamed the “Political Instability Task Force (PITF), are available on the Internet (see

<http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu/pitf/>).

2. These specific indicators were used as surrogate measures of broader concepts: *openness to international trade* tapped a country's integration into the international system; *infant mortality* reflected the general quality of life in a country; while *democracy* indicated the conflict-dampening effects of open political institutions (Esty et al., 1998). The latest work of the Political Instability Task Force is reported in (Goldstone et al., 2010).

3. In mid-December 2010 a Tunisian street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, burned himself to death following his mistreatment at the hands of public officials. Protests following his death led to the resignation of Tunisia's President Zine el Abdine Ben Ali less than a month later. This, in turn, prompted demonstrations leading to the swift overthrow of President Hosni Mubarek in Egypt and violent protests elsewhere in the Arab world including Yemen, Libya and Syria.

4. The Canadian government appears to have reached the same conclusion with respect to its aid program for Haiti. In early 2013 International Co-operation Minister Julian Fantino froze aid to the island nation, claiming that "aid is not getting the results 'that Canadians have a right to expect'" (as quoted in Clark, 2013, Jan. 5: A4).

5. A decade later, in spite of massive international efforts, there is scant evidence that Haiti has made much forward progress, and indeed there is some pointing to regression. For example, Michel Martelly who was elected president in 2011, has proposed "to reconstitute the Haitian military as a kind of national guard or civil defense force *to supplement the weak national police*" (Archibald, 2011, Oct. 25, italics added). Jonathan Glennie cites a report from the European Court of Auditors "that only 'one third of [European Commission] projects have been, or are likely to be, successful in reaching their objectives'" (as quoted in Glennie, 2008: 57).

6. The problems faced by the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, working in an environment far more difficult than the UN encountered in Haiti, dominate contemporary headlines and point to "capacity building" as an uncertain strategy when a "post-conflict environment" exists in name only (see Suhrke, 2006).

Matthew LeRiche and Matthew Arnold discuss the unique situation in Sudan during the period following the CPA when the international community was committed to capacity building in both north and south. This led to a situation where efforts to build the capacity of the Sudanese Sector led directly to its ability to destabilize the south, which they describe as "verg[ing] on the scandalous" (2012: 39).

7. In addition to UNMEE, SHIRBRIG contributed to four other UN peacekeeping operations: UNOCI -10 members; UNMIL- 24 members; UNAMIS - 17 members and UNMIS 308 members (Koops and Varwick, 2008: 17-21).

8. Deployment for a response to genocide was set a 14 days and it was noted that this could only be met "by forces that are ready, assembled, fully equipped and exercised with transport available on immediate call with logistic supplies pre-packed and ready for delivery by air" (Cilliers, 2008: 4).

9. Although President al-Bashir actually attended the independence ceremony, the repressive actions by his government appear to have caused the U.S. to renege on promised rewards. According to Andrew Natsios, "because of the atrocities committed by Khartoum in Darfur and later in 2011 in the Nuba Mountains ... U.S. policy makers found it politically untenable to begin any improvement of relations with Khartoum or the rescinding of any sanctions" (2012: 169).

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