Regional Solutions to Regional Problems: The Elusive Search for Security in the African Great Lakes

PETER UVIN, ANDRE BOURQUE, AND CRAIG COHEN

In the last decade, the Great Lakes region of Africa[1] has been the quintessential 'bad neighborhood.' Genocide in Rwanda, civil war in Burundi, and a failed state of continental proportions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have resulted in the violent deaths or displacement of millions of people, and the dramatic impoverishment of tens of millions more. Even in Uganda, the country most often cited as the shining model for the region, President Yoweri Museveni's government has been unable to find a solution to rebel-led insecurity in the north and west of the country, or to justify the army's involvement in the DRC.

Almost all the violence in the Great Lakes region crosses national borders. Burundian rebels have attacked their country from the DRC, Tanzania, and Rwanda. Some of those who carried out the Rwandan genocide continue to roam freely in the DRC, launching incursions against Tutsis throughout the region. Rwanda and Uganda have occupied large portions of the Congo for extended periods, arming some rebels, fighting others, and attacking each other. Most of

Peter Uvin *is the Henry Leir Professor in International Humanitarian Studies at the Fletcher School. He is also a regular consultant for development and conflict issues in the Great Lakes region.* ***Craig Cohen*** *is a Researcher for the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a bipartisan think tank in Washington, D.C. He received a M.A.L.D. from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 2004.* ***Andre Bourque*** *is an independent consultant; he has lived and worked in Eastern Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi for decades. This article is a partial synthesis of a discussion paper written by the authors for the Dutch embassy in Rwanda. Neither article reflects official Dutch policy. The full paper can be accessed at http://fletcher.tufts.edu/humansecurity.*

the people currently in power in Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and the DRC have at some point invaded their own countries from the territory of a neighboring state. Refugees, smugglers, rebels, and government armies pay little heed to national borders in the Great Lakes, furthering instability and weakening already fragile states.

Given the regional nature of this violence, any successful security strategy must employ a regional framework. A true regional strategy should explicitly address those variables that are regional in nature, such as economic opportunities, security dynamics, and social and cultural networks. The current regional dimensions of insecurity have such profound, negative ramifications that they need to be addressed prior to national dimensions, or at least they must be addressed simultaneously, for these regional factors undermine all potential for domestic progress. Specifically, the regional dimensions are: 1) pervasive regional insecurity; 2) violent exploitation of natural resources; and 3) the absence of any strong regional constituency for peace emerging from within civil society. Donors should therefore invest in a regional security architecture, a regime to regulate natural resources, and regional civil society networks. Otherwise, peace will prove an elusive goal in the Great Lakes, and billions of dollars in humanitarian and development assistance and millions of lives will surely go to waste over the next decade. Donor interventions that seek to address national problems, such as ill-governance, will fail so long as regional dimensions are left unattended.

There are several approaches that could help to create an effective regional security strategy for the Great Lakes. Conventional wisdom has been insufficient to address key security challenges, and new approaches should consider ideas that rarely find their way onto donor agendas. These new approaches should be provocative, focus on high-impact activities, and value those opportunities the donor community has missed or failed to invest in sufficiently.

THINKING REGIONALLY

For years, observers of the Great Lakes have underscored the regional dimension of the problem, but little has been done about it in practice. The European Union (EU), the United Nations, the United States, the United Kingdom (UK), and Belgium have had representatives of various kinds in the region, but all have tended to focus on national rather than regional problems. The World Bank manages the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP), but in practice, this is a set of parallel national programs. Few aid agencies have any regional programming whatsoever.

Donors and implementing agencies have trouble launching regional programs in the Great Lakes for three main reasons. The first is the lack of clear institutional anchors. For national policies, the obvious institutional partners are

governments and local civil societies. In the Great Lakes, regional inter-state organizations are absent or extremely weak, while regional civil society networks are only beginning to emerge. Second, regional conflict, instability, and distrust make it very difficult for a third party to build consensus for a regional vision. Regional strategies need at least partial buy-in from local actors. Third, it is often difficult for donors to position regional programs alongside existing bilateral ones. The boundaries between what should be regional and what should be bilateral are not always clear. Questions persist and defy easy answers, such as who has the power to make key decisions and how best to avoid competition between programs. A regional strategy for international donors requires difficult choices and institutional adjustments. It cannot simply emerge from piling up activities and programs on top of already heavy national workloads.

For over a decade, outside watchers and civil society organizations in the region have called for a regional security strategy in the Great Lakes because of the interdependent nature of the threats facing the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. Debate has centered on the need for a Great Lakes regional conference where such a strategy could be negotiated once the security situation has stabilized in the countries of the region. Last year, with peace deals signed in Burundi and the DRC, political stability in Rwanda, and a chance for improved security in Uganda resulting from the peace process moving forward in Sudan, the African Union (AU) launched the long-awaited Great Lakes Regional Conference with UN Security Council support. The conference resulted in a common Dar es Salaam declaration on implementing non-aggression and common defense pacts; establishing a regional security framework for the prevention, management, and peaceful resolution of conflicts; and promoting common policies to end small arms proliferation and stop genocide. But these declarations had no impact, as reports of clashes between Congolese, Rwandan, and Ugandan forces in the eastern DRC emerged even before the ink was dry.

THE REGIONAL NATURE OF CONFLICT IN THE GREAT LAKES

The key security problem in the region is that states are continually being undermined and challenged by internal civil wars that systematically spill over into neighboring territories. These civil wars are the result of, and are deeply embedded in, the deepest problem of the region: the pervasive ill-governance and neo-patrimonialism inherited by each country at independence. This civil strife has in turn been nurtured by poor national leadership and misaligned Western interests during the past half-century.

While their origins are internal, civil wars tend to become regional conflicts in the Great Lakes. There are several reasons why this is so. One is the fact that blood, cultural, and linguistic ties rarely correspond to national borders—both

because of the arbitrary manner in which these boundaries were drawn in European capitals during colonization, and because of the major migratory and refugee flows that have occurred during the 20th century. As a result, rebels can easily find refuge in neighboring countries with people with whom they have much in common and, at times, share a cause. In addition, people often see dynamics in neighboring countries as a mirror of their own, reinterpreting internal events in terms borrowed from the outside. One has long seen this with Rwanda and Burundi, but it has also recently emerged in the eastern DRC.

The regional nature of war in the Great Lakes can also be explained by the deliberate actions of leaders who capitalize on communal ties and porous borders for their own political and economic benefit. They support and protect outside rebel movements in order to weaken neighboring countries, whose governments then promptly return the favor in a tit-for-tat approach. The current presidents of both Rwanda and Uganda rose to power in military campaigns launched from the borderlands of adjacent countries. The same holds true for sizable parts of the transitional governments of Burundi and the DRC. Because key power-holders in all four countries achieved their positions through violence launched from neighboring territories, it is understandable that these leaders would do all they could to prevent others from repeating this achievement.

State weakness—the inability of the state to control flows of arms, people, and natural resources—further contributes to regional instability. Those in power know they are incapable of controlling their borders and thus constantly expect violations of their sovereignty by neighboring states and armed groups. When people cross these borders in massive numbers to escape armed conflict, new economic, political, and social tensions are generated that further destabilize host nations. The DRC's proximity to Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, for instance, combined with its weak state structure and mineral wealth, has provided the region with a safe haven for armed groups of all kinds to keep up their fight—at a profit, to boot!

In short, the root cause of regional insecurity in the Great Lakes is pervasive ill-governance at the state level—now ongoing for more than a century and yet still expected and internalized by all. These domestic conflicts, which are increasingly violent and unstable, then inevitably spill over into the region, often reinforcing each other. It is for these reasons that developing a regional framework for addressing the conflicts of the Great Lakes is essential.

THE PROBLEM WITH NON-REGIONAL SECURITY SECTOR REFORMS

A clear example of the inadequacy of national, rather than regional, interventions in the Great Lakes is security sector reform (SSR). In the countries of the Great Lakes, real power is usually hidden in small groups of military and civil-

ian officials—often not the ones whose hands we shake in Ministries of Foreign Affairs or Finance. The militaries, and the rebels opposing them, are often deeply unprofessional and predatory. Modifying relations between the military and society is without a doubt one of the most important challenges facing each of the countries of the Great Lakes.

Donors realize this, and are thus currently engaged in all four countries in a host of security sector reform activities. The collective goal of SSR is to create apolitical, professional, efficient, and typically smaller ("right-sized") security structures that are accountable to government and society. These programs do not exclusively concern the army, but also seek to promote reform within police forces, intelligence bureaus, and justice systems. SSR programs, then, seek to redistribute power. The problem is that power is rarely redistributed through projects—only through politics.

Power-holders may go along with SSR projects, as they bring attention and resources; but at the end of the day, they will make sure that the key features of the political and economic status quo are maintained. They may be willing to accept quite a few things that are not crucial to their personal benefits, such as decreasing the size of the army, participating in various forms of training, integrating ex-rebels, and maybe even having conversations with members of parliament. However, they will not implement any reforms that will truly endanger the power and privileged positions they have attained. In this respect, SSR suffers from the same crucial defect as do structural adjustment programs: they are to be implemented by the very same group that is injured by them.

There are a number of political factors that would make security sector reform more likely to succeed, and the two primary ones are regional in nature. The first is regional security. During active inter-country war or a significant outside threat to state power, it is difficult—if not impossible—to build domestic coalitions for reform. The second is the economic incentive structure facing civilian and military leaders. So long as civilian and military leaders continue to profit from the looting of natural resources outside of state borders, it is highly unlikely they will voluntarily take actions that end up cutting off their revenue streams. In short, without progress on these two crucial regional variables, SSR programs are doomed to produce limited, easily reversible results.

TOWARD A REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

A major aim of the recent African Union conference was the creation of a new regional security architecture for the Great Lakes. The final Dar es Salaam Declaration dutifully lays out many of the elements of such an architecture: establishing non-aggression and common defense pacts, creating regional security frameworks for resolving conflicts peacefully, ending small arms flows, and

stopping genocide. As with most paper agreements, the proof is in its implementation.

Within a month of the conference's conclusion, Rwandan President Paul Kagame caused a major diplomatic storm with his assertion that Rwandan troops "might already have" invaded the DRC to attack those who carried out the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Rwanda and the DRC were once again on the verge of war, confrontations allegedly took place between Ugandan and Rwandan troops, and pogroms spread through large parts of the eastern DRC.

This episode illustrates the difficulties of a policy of constructive engagement followed by many donors, including South Africa, the UK, and the EU. Power rests in the hands of small numbers of military and civilian elites who personally benefit—economically as well as politically—more from war than from peace, more from the absence of rule-bound behavior than from the presence of any regional security guarantees. These people are neither checked by opposition from within government or civil society, nor constrained by a coherent or forceful approach emanating from the international community.

What the international community needs to offer, then, is a sustained and coherent policy that builds on three pillars: formal and informal *mediation and facilitation* to open channels of communication; *technical support* during negotiation and implementation of a regional agreement, including assistance in managing verification and follow-up mechanisms; and serious *diplomatic pressure and aid conditionality* on the governments concerned if they fail to engage in good faith negotiations and implementation. These three pillars can only succeed if coupled with a fourth element: support for the growth of a truly regional civil society.

All of these pieces—facilitation, support, pressure, and strengthening civil society—must be considered together. Conditionality without a realistic security proposal will not yield peace. Neither will financial support in the absence of a principled and forceful stand by the international community, nor civil society support without technical assistance. Piecemeal, uncoordinated, small, and national—as opposed to regional—actions will be a waste of time and do nothing to stem the taking of human lives.

Some trusted actor needs to mediate between the key players and help lay the groundwork for the emergence of a true regional security architecture. The first step should consist of opening channels of communication through confidential approaches by a small team of trusted outsiders, first acting as a go-between and then bringing key actors face to face. Once channels of communication are open, a facilitation team could provide technical support for the development of a common vision and program of action. Many of the people in power in the region lack knowledge of how to manage and implement confidence-building measures, transborder security mechanisms, civilian protection, and security sector reform. Confidential, high-quality, direct advice to the key

people—prime ministers, ministers of defense, and army top brass—could be of great help here. For example, it would be very useful to include people in the facilitation team tasked with bringing the specific concerns of women to decision makers' attention.

If and when a truly regional security architecture starts taking shape, the international community needs to provide support for its implementation. Some of this can be financial, such as funding the resultant institutions. More important, however, is the active engagement in third-party verification mechanisms. Indeed, it seems evident that any durable solution to the security dilemma in the region will need to involve mechanisms in which neutral third parties monitor events on the ground, share intelligence, and develop procedures that may allow the signatories to trust that the other parties to the agreement are not cheating. This will take time, and no doubt consist of numerous setbacks, but seeing the process through could make a crucial contribution to regional security. Here it may be very useful to work with African organizations—particularly the African Union—and to learn lessons from the interesting experience of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

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At the same time, exertion of strong diplomatic pressure on states sponsoring spoilers is also crucial, given that countries such as Uganda and Rwanda receive much of their income from foreign aid. Of course, a policy of diplomatic coercion is an extremely difficult tool to wield. Donors often differ in their assessments and aims, and as a result their pressure is often uncoordinated if not contradictory. Even coordinated outside pressure may not work if it only creates token compliance or provokes backlashes such as a coup by more radical elements. Given these difficulties, it is usually better to work with civil society in order to build up its capacity to produce such pressure—a much slower job, for sure, but ultimately a more promising one.

Yet, when credible ideas for a regional security architecture do emerge, it will be necessary to deal forcefully with those states and leaders that continue to sabotage progress, deliberately foment violence in neighboring countries, or routinely violate agreements. A new incentive structure needs to be created for the region, in which compliance with security agreements is the norm. While conditionality alone cannot do the job, forceful action is necessary in conjunction with facilitation of and support for a regional security infrastructure. Such action must include work on the natural resources question and be backed up by support to civil society.

MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES

All the countries in the Great Lakes region are war economies, at least in part, and all are linked through the sale and transit of resources from the DRC. The current way natural resources are exploited in the Congo by both Congolese and foreign parties weakens army command structures and ethos, further undermines civilian control over the army, and finances war and violence by creating a myriad of incentives and opportunities for the continuation of conflict. It also undermines rational, sustainable, and locally beneficial exploitation of natural resources, while strengthening neo-patrimonial, inefficient, unaccountable state systems and policies throughout the region.

Illegality is the most broadly shared concern regarding natural resource exploitation in the DRC among international activists and UN personnel. But in an environment in which transparent, rule-bound extraction has never taken place, and where there has been no effective state for years, the border between legality and illegality is unclear. For instance, is illegal exploitation merely resource extraction carried out by foreigners? If so, what if these foreigners enter into joint ventures with nationals, as is happening now?

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The main issue, rather, is the violent, unaccountable, uncontrolled, inequitable, and neo-patrimonial nature of the exploitation. This manner of exploitation may persist even in a legalized situation. Congo's contemporary exploitative predator economy is the continuation of a model begun under the early age of colonialism, ingrained in the very definition of the Congo Free State when Western countries created it at the 1885 Berlin Conference. The trends associated with Congo's violent exploitation of its natural resources also characterize the situation in the three other countries in the region as well: they, too, possess networks of military and political elites who reproduce themselves through privileged access to state and aid resources and private sector opportunities.

This model of predation and state collapse has occurred irrespective of the amount or type of international aid that donors have poured in. The resilience of the model teaches a number of important lessons. Foremost, it reflects that rebuilding the economic and political system that preceded the war in the DRC is of little use, for it will simply produce the same results again. Getting foreigners out of the business of exploiting natural resources, for example, will not end

the violent and inequitable exploitation—it will simply nationalize it. Economic predation is a deliberate system, which has become deeply ingrained in institutional, political, and even social and psychological dynamics. The scale of resistance to change by those who profit from it is an indication of the enormous benefits they extract from the system. Replacing this predator system with a peaceful, accountable, and equitable one will thus require forceful, long-term actions; the dysfunction will not stop spontaneously with time, or as a result of some new mining law written by a foreign expert, or even with the deployment of a new national army in the region.

Until now, however, no concrete international action has been taken to alter the incentives that perpetuate the problem. The standard options on the table are of limited applicability. Kimberly-type certification regimes, such as those that exist for diamonds, take many years to create and offer no certainty as to their effectiveness. Boycotts were originally pushed for by European non-governmental organizations (NGOs), but are now recognized to have little impact, while imposing high costs on ordinary people. Quite a few policy papers outline the need to make the "peace dividend" more advantageous than the "war dividend." While this is a nice concept, nobody seems to have much to say about how to implement it. The only (implicit) solution, it would seem, is the creation of a well-functioning legal and administrative framework to manage Congolese resources—in other words, the (re-)construction of the Congolese state.

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Reconstructing the Congolese state machinery underlies most current donor support already. The World Bank, for instance, is already financing an expert to write a Mining Code. Many other donors are pouring money into the Kinshasa administration. However, in terms of dealing with the problem of natural resource exploitation, this strategy is bound to fail in the short and medium terms, because creation of a competent, efficient Congolese state devoted to people's interests will take years to develop—especially because many in the current government are engaged in violent resource exploitation.

In the short run, the overwhelming priority is to eliminate the capacity of natural resources to feed war and insecurity. A second priority is to ensure that the exploitation of natural resources is more equitable—producing more benefits to the population at large.

Clearly, the short-term interest of the main current beneficiaries of violent natural resource exploitation—the "violent entrepreneurs" who are elites and

warlords in the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda—is to avoid change and regulation. Yet, as the violence finances itself and provides enormous profits, resistance to change is almost cost-free to these entrepreneurs. What this means is that firm policy, coercive diplomacy, and maybe force itself will be required to ensure compliance. At the same time, such forceful action should be used to develop a system that creates incentives for all parties: government and elites, corporations, current beneficiaries, and the population at large. Only if many parties can be co-opted into such a system, with just a small minority that needs to be dealt with forcefully, can a solution be sustainable and eventually depend less on international action. The incentives necessary for such a win-win solution include an environment of stability and predictability, guaranteed income flows, and the prospect for some violent entrepreneurs to become recognized as legal, legitimate players. Implementing such a solution, of course, is the tricky part. The best option is a two-track solution, to be executed in parallel, which could lead to an appropriate regime regulating the Great Lakes region's violent exploitation of Congolese resources.

The first track gradually integrates many of the violent entrepreneurs into a peaceful and sustainable regime to bring peace in the short-term and lay the groundwork for equitable exploitation. This could be obtained through a combination of negotiation (on the basis of possible gains violent entrepreneurs could acquire from turning legal and non-violent) and targeted pressures similar to those used against international terrorists, such as restrictions on freedom of circulation and the freezing of foreign bank accounts.

Integration, however, won't be easily accomplished because the scale of exploitation in the DRC is vast, and violent entrepreneurs are likely to resist being co-opted. In addition, violent entrepreneurs have different motivations. Some are warlords who passively and opportunistically take advantage of the current chaos, while others are hardened spoilers reluctant to change the status quo. A number of differentiating variables are important to note: country of origin, degree of autonomy, size of territory and type of resources controlled, extent to which they function as part of the state structure, and the degree of suffering they have inflicted on local populations. Understanding these variables is essential to any analysis of whether a particular armed band could be co-opted or must be coerced.

The second track for regulating violent resource exploitation in the DRC is to create a number of local and possibly regional funds, to which multinational corporations and local entrepreneurs could contribute, and which would provide basic social and economic infrastructures that the state cannot provide. Essentially, this is a tax for the common good, controlled not by the state, but by some other local or international entity. Examples of actions like this can already be found in the eastern DRC, where private Congolese traders have invested in an airport and hydroelectric power stations.

Contributing to such a fund should be a requirement for violent entrepreneurs to join a peace process. Such funds could be fed by proceeds from resource extraction (with approximately five percent going to the local community). Depending on their scale, these funds could be created at the local, provincial, or regional levels. Multilateral corporations should be encouraged to contribute as well, because they bring both infusions of foreign capital and desperately needed expertise. A helpful possibility may be for international institutions to create a set of guidelines through which corporations could invest a portion of their income in local development funds. The mandate of the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) may also need to be extended after elections and demobilization is complete, in order to protect such a regulatory system. MONUC's costs could be borne by the extraction of these same resources.

Of course, the question persists of who should manage such a fund when local and national government officials are corrupt or geographically distant, and when civil society is divided or lacks capacity. Basically, funds must be managed by multi-stakeholder boards involving the private sector, local government, and local civil society—perhaps with international support. The key to the regulatory program's success will be who sits on these boards. A further question is which civil society organizations can legitimately represent "the population" and have the capacity to steer the fund according to principles of good governance. This is not an easy question, particularly in the DRC, where most civil society organizations are artificial, exclusive, clientelistic, and without genuine popular support. The question becomes even more problematic because the board would have control over significant resources, triggering the appetite of potential kleptocrats.

In this respect, the World Bank's work on the Chad-Cameroon pipeline constitutes an interesting model. What is unique about this example is the formal negotiated structure outlining the use of local income from the pipeline, as well as the set of oversight mechanisms that have significant international involvement, and are based on clearly outlined rules and principles.

The Chad-Cameroon model came about as a result of coercion. It is not a system the Chad's government itself asked for. And yet, once such a mechanism was established, it created major benefits for all: the Chad's government got a major investment and resource flow it would otherwise not have received; the multi-national corporations got financial and administrative support from the international community; the people of the region acquired jobs and investment in their communities, as well as protection from environmental guidelines; and the citizens of Chad got some assurance of increased spending on matters of concern to them. Has Chad become paradise on Earth? Of course not. The willingness and capacity of the government to spend these resources for the people's well-being is still low. There will be cheating (as there has been already in Chad, where $4.5 million was spent on arms in contravention of the system during the

first year), and the environment will suffer more than activists desire. And yet, it is a system that constitutes significant progress compared to the situation that would have prevailed without it.

STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY

High politics issues of security sector reform, regional security architecture, and the creation of a natural resource exploitation regime must be complemented by and grounded in an approach that strengthens regional civil society organizations. In the short run, this is required for two reasons: to help local people deal with the immense challenges of insecurity and poverty that states (and the international community) seem unwilling and incapable of addressing, and to anchor the policies of the international community (including the adoption of a coercive approach) as much as possible in local ideas and dynamics. In the long run, a stronger civil society is one of the crucial levers of change in the region. At the end of the day, solutions will have to emerge from within a broad and diverse civil society.

Typically, donor support to civil society centers on financial and institutional funding to local NGOs—mainly, to cover project costs, and to strengthen NGOs' administrative capacity. Donors tend to fund NGOs that speak their language and that look like replicas of Western agencies, but that often have little grassroots support or internal democracy. It is true that these NGOs are not likely to be predatory in the way the governments of the region are, but they are also unlikely to exert much pressure on their governments, to represent genuine local alternatives, or to create true citizens as opposed to clients, because they have little credibility and support from within their own societies, and are almost totally dependent on outsiders for their survival.

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A strategy to strengthen civil society in the Great Lakes requires three steps, all equally important. The first step is to ensure the simple *survival* of both civil society and local populations. People need to be alive and minimally secure before they can engage as citizens working for social change. The operative question becomes, therefore, whether civil society can be used to help enhance civilian safety when international peacekeepers, national armies and police are lacking. The second step addresses the difficult task of suf-

ficiently empowering civil society so that it develops a *regional presence*. Too often, donors set up regional umbrella groups that tend to collapse under the weight of donor support and individual interests without adequately strengthening organizations at a national level. The third step is to use strengthened regional networks to help in *planning for peace*. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD's) role in providing a network for peace in Sudan provides a ready model.

Making progress on each of these above three steps is necessary if the ultimate outcome desired is stability and good governance. First, donors must ensure the survival of civil society. Civil society, like the citizens it represents, is threatened in insecure environments by violence and predation. It can also be part of the solution, though donors often fail to see this potential. For example, a priori, there seem to be two ways to end the threat of spoilers—either entice them to join the peace or coerce them. In the eastern DRC until now, however, neither MONUC nor the Congolese army has been able to achieve either. Hence, a reflection on civil society-based alternatives or complements is urgently required.

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The basic proposition that local communities and civil society can play a larger role in providing for their own security is one that has not been widely embraced by the international community. International donors tend to be preoccupied with their own strengths, requirements, and timelines, and distrustful of alternatives that take them away from hard military solutions—even when these are not available or sufficient. Most people and civil society organizations do not profit from war and insecurity in the way governments, militaries, rebels, and warlords do. Therefore, local civil society can be more effective at providing for local security and less costly than putting foreign boots on the ground.

One way to do this is by reaching out to armed groups. Civil society organizations can be encouraged to play an increased role in community conflict resolution mechanisms and in bringing together warring factions. There have been examples of groups of wise men bringing an end to inter-communitarian clashes, for instance, in the Barza sphere in North Kivu; similarly, in Northern Uganda, traditional authorities now play a significant role in creating openings for ending the war there.

Civil society organizations could also play a more active role in reintegrat-

ing ex-combatants and participating in community-based policing mechanisms. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) requires breaking the command and control structures operating over rebel fighters. Reintegration of ex-combatants, many of whom have only known fighting for their entire adolescent and adult life, has proven the most effective way to break these ties. The inability to reintegrate these former soldiers makes it more likely they will continue to use violence for political or economic gain. Most DDR programs focus on ex-combatants, but donors ought to develop ways to target entire communities instead. Therefore, civil society organizations could be funded to help facilitate reintegration of ex-combatants into local communities.

Traditional police reform programs have failed to curb local abuse or to improve public attitudes toward the police. This should not be surprising considering that these same police officers are often the ones who exploited local communities during the conflict. Their abuse may continue in the post-conflict period, as will the public's fear and distrust. Post-conflict communities tend to be highly dynamic environments, with ex-combatants, refugees, and internally displaced persons coming and going, and with alliances quickly sealed and broken. Local police may serve as primary arbiters of authority on the community level, along with local rebels and warlords, and are thus as likely to benefit personally from such volatility as they are to seek ways of stabilizing the situation.

Community-based policing, as an alternative to traditional police reform programs, is an attempt to transform how local police function, emphasizing citizen protection rather than the protection of the state. The philosophy underpinning this effort is that the public has the right to have input into policing, in exchange for its participation in and support of crime prevention. Examples of joint strategies between communities and police include local citizen participation in providing intelligence to prevent crimes and attacks, and the creation of local-level public safety committees that oversee police activity. Creative models of engaging civil society could be developed, including more innovative uses of the media and existing technologies, to serve as early warning mechanisms on a community level. Women have a larger role to play here; they are too rarely recognized as playing a potentially positive role in providing security.

The second step donors must take is to strengthen civil society on a regional level. This is more than just supporting a few favorite NGOs. Rather, it consists of strengthening deeply anchored civil society organizations on a national level, then helping them to build intellectual and social links across borders, after which umbrella structures can be established to coordinate member activities under the control of members themselves.

When strengthening organizations on a national level, donors need to start with a limited number of promising leaders. Donors cannot try to build capacity in a way that kills these organizations by overburdening them. Rather, they need

to increase internal democracy and transparency, improve management, help with strategic and risk analysis, and build relations and networks with other organizations. Donors cannot limit this to traditional development NGOs. They also need to include grassroots organizations that are not typically recognized.

To establish and then strengthen regional networks, donors should first create opportunities and incentives for informal coordination and dialogue, and then slowly include interested civil society organizations from the same countries before extending to neighboring countries. Only after this is done should umbrella organizations be set up. If these are created too quickly or formalized too fast, they will lose their power. They should be funded through their membership; otherwise, these umbrella groups risk remaining donor-dependent. If this process is done incorrectly, control shifts from members to the umbrella group's permanent staff, which ends up competing with its members. Funding should not flow downward from the umbrella group to members, but upward from grassroots organizations to umbrella groups. This can be facilitated through matching grants. None of this will be implemented quickly, but there exists promising work throughout the region, which could be supported more intelligently.

Third, donors should help civil society provide a capable regional network for planning for peace. This work should start now, ahead of the post-conflict phase. The capacity needs to be present in order to act fast when windows of opportunity emerge for concrete actions that could solidify peace. These actions could include networks of locally-based and international actors constructing a shared knowledge of peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction, and conflict management practices. The model of IGAD's Planning for Peace is instructive. Having a network of actors with a joint vision can make a real difference. Significant efforts should be made to reach out to women—attempts that could start with trans-border networks linking communities.

REGIONAL SOLUTIONS TO REGIONAL PROBLEMS

The last year has once again shown that international peacekeeping in the Great Lakes is a dismal failure. The conquest in early June 2004 of Bukavu and the reign of terror against its population, the murder in August 2004 of hundreds of Congolese refugees in Burundian camps, the incursion by Rwandan troops into the DRC in December 2004, the spread of anti-Tutsi violence throughout the eastern DRC in early 2005, and the resumption of extreme violence in the northeastern DRC region of Ituri all took place under the eyes of largely impotent UN peacekeeping troops. There will never be enough troops with a clear enough mandate to meaningfully address regional insecurity in the Great Lakes if the root causes of war and predation remain unattended. It is only by addressing these root causes that any progress can be made.

An explicitly regional strategy is required. National negotiations and reforms, important as they are, will never endure if neighbors can easily undermine them; if spoilers can simply withdraw to the safety and advantage of adjacent territories; or if the economic and financial gains from the violent status quo continue to vastly outweigh those of peace. The regional crisis is self-perpetuating: porous borders, multiple rebel groups, and violent resource exploitation create enormous opportunities and incentives for all players in the region to continue with their current predatory behavior. The standard technical solutions are clearly inadequate: no amount of aid or technical assistance will suffice, and no number of international troops on the ground will be high enough to yield sustainable results in the absence of a major political strategy of engagement, in which the international community tackles the regional dynamics head-on.

Progress can only be made on the basis of a three-pronged strategy containing a much higher level of coercion than has been displayed to date. First, the international community needs to help develop concrete, realistic, positive actions and proposals that modify the current harmful effects of regional security and economic environments. This should be done in consultation with local civil societies and through mechanisms of negotiation with governments. These actions and proposals must also explicitly address the key political and economic issues that perpetuate insecurity. In all this, the African Union could play a crucial and unifying role. Second, the international community needs to be willing to use conditionality and the threat of force to limit the economic benefits available to spoilers, to ensure actors engage in good-faith negotiations, and to hold them accountable for the bargains to which they agree. And third, the international community must support civil society in the region, both to help it to protect itself from violence and predation, and to strengthen its capacity to be an internal engine for change.

No progress will be made in the region without strong international community involvement. There are simply too many spoilers, too many good reasons for powerful forces to prefer the status quo, and too much distrust between actors in the region. At the same time, forcefulness needs to be anchored in a locally grounded vision of progress; in a negotiated and achievable plan to change the incentive structure from war and exploitation to peace and development; and in a locally owned vision of governance, minority rights, and rule of law. Such a vision will need to grow out of the relationship between power-holders and civil society groups. Both are needed for this formidable task. This will take time, but if a propitious environment is not created, it will not happen. ■

NOTES

1 The geographic region of the Great Lakes typically includes those countries bordering Lakes Victoria, Tanganyika, and Kivu, which include the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and Tanzania.