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POSSIBLE CONFLICT HOTSPOTS AND LIKELY SCENARIOS FOR
MASSIVE POPULATION DISPLACEMENT

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1. Introduction

While it can easily be predicted that most continents of the world would encounter conflict within a given period, going into specifics as regards the possible pattern of manifestation is fraught with considerable difficulties. For one, it is not often that history repeats itself, and even when it does, the scenes are usually different, forcing actors to act their scripts differently. Looking at the possible conflicts that may result in massive human displacement is thus confronted with difficulties, especially as unexpected developments can throw overboard predictions made against the background of well laid out logic. However, Africa displays a peculiarity that significantly assuages this problem, as more often than not events come back to vindicate earlier predictions, provided, of course, these were conceived against a thorough understanding of the complexities of the continent. This is largely because the premises under which the predictions were made often remain relevant, even if they are temporarily obscured by circumstantial developments.

But while difficulties may sometimes surround predicting the emergence of conflict, its destructive consequences are not contestable. One of these is massive population displacement. Africa's plight in this respect is well documented in academic literature and anecdotal evidence, such that it serves no purpose going into any details here.¹ Suffice it, however, to note that while the continent's refugee and human displacement problems are rooted in many factors, including environmental and economic, the main cause remains the conflicts that have characterized its affairs since independence. Consequently, a great deal can be learnt about the complexities of human displacement in Africa if more is known about the continent's conflicts, the pattern of their manifestation and the difficulties inherent in containing them. The knowledge thus acquired can increase the predictive ability of agencies and organizations that have to respond to complex emergencies in the continent. But this apart, a proper conceptualization of African conflict is necessary in order to correct the stereotypical depictions that sometimes colour analyses of the subject.

This paper looks at the future of African conflict and human displacement over the next two years. It is not an attempt to write a history of the future. Rather, it hopes to provide a scenario study of the political and socio-economic outlook for the next two years, with a view to identifying areas where there might be cases of massive human displacement, their likely causes and the possible pattern of their manifestation.² The remainder of the paper is divided into five sections. The first takes a panoramic survey of Africa at the beginning of the new millennium. The objective here is to provide the socio-economic and political background against which possible conflicts are to emerge. The second section identifies the key themes that are to determine politics and security in Africa in the course of the next two years, while section three, which forms the core of the paper, looks at the developments that are likely to unfold in the different regions. In the fourth section, there is a discussion of possible themes in the pattern of migration, while the fifth section concludes the paper.

¹ Recent figures provided by the UNHCR put Africa's refugee population at more than 3 million as at April 2001. Of these, there are about 800,000 in Central and West Africa and about 2.2 million in the East and Horn, with the Great Lakes having more than 2 million.

² Interest in African affairs has increased since the beginning of the 1990s. See e.g. Davidson, B., *The Search for Africa: A History in the Making*, London: James Currey, 1994; Khadiagala, G.M., *Thoughts on Africa and the New World Order*, *The Round Table*, No. 324, 1992; Mazrui, A., *Comments: Africa in Search of Self-Pacification*, *African Affairs*, Vol. 93, (No. 370), January 1994

2. Heavy Burden, Fragile Shoulders: Africa at the Dawn of the Millennium

At least two considerations make a discussion of Africa's situation at the dawn of the new millennium important for this paper. First, many of the issues that are likely to emerge in the course of 2001 and 2002 have their antecedents in the developments that had already become apparent some time before. Consequently, an understanding of this background will assist in explaining some of the possible future developments and the likely pattern of their expression. Second, the end of the millennium coincided, even if somewhat roughly, with the end of the Cold War - the main determinant of global security considerations for almost half a century. The euphoria generated by this development has forced many scholars to open a new page in security analysis, with one, indeed, describing the development as "the end of history",³ and another seeing it as preceding a "clash of civilizations".⁴ Regardless of whether or not one shares sentiments of this nature, there can be little doubt that the "peace-dividend" anticipated with the end of the Cold War has forced many regions of the world to shift their focus from conflict to socio-economic and political emancipation of their population.

Six major issues are worthy of note in our present analysis of conflict and human displacement in Africa. These are:

- (a) The socio-economic situation and its impact on security;
- (b) The prevailing political situation;
- (c) Changes in the manifestation of conflict;
- (d) The changing pattern of regional involvement in conflict management;
- (e) The increasing role of NGOs; and
- (f) The enhanced activities of the United Nations and its agencies

In a way, all these issues are intrinsically linked, and a panoramic survey of their inter-relatedness and how they all link up to explain the causes and possible manifestations of human displacement is important.

2.1. Socio-economic Deprivation and Its Impact on Security

Africa's socio-economic picture as the 21st century commenced has been the subject of discussion in many studies, all of which appear unanimous that the situation was at best dismal.⁵ Virtually all the countries in sub-Saharan Africa had resorted to International Monetary Fund and World Bank assistance in addressing their economic problems, with most implementing a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Indeed, by the time the new millennium began, satisfying the basic socio-economic needs of the population had become difficult. This situation had a number of consequences for security and population

³ This is the position of Francis Fukuyama in Fukuyama, F., *The End of History and the Last Man*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992

⁴ Huntington, S., *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996

⁵ For more on this, see Akinrinade, S. and A.Sesay (eds.), *Africa in the Post Cold War International System*, London: Pinter, 1998

displacement in conflict.⁶ First, it increased the potential grounds for conflicts, as deprivation made the population more restive, and as such open to rebellion and violence. Second, it made the countries more vulnerable to manipulation, especially as they had to satisfy the demands of their creditors. Third, it placed greater pressure on the natural resource environment, a situation that heightened natural resource-centred conflicts, and threatened harmonious inter-group relations. Finally, it weakened the capacity of the countries to evolve reliable mechanisms for handling conflicts. All these had an impact on the ways human displacement manifests itself in the course of conflict.

2.2. Political Instability

The political situation at the commencement of the new millennium was not different from its socio-economic outlook, and this is bound to be reflected in present and future developments. Although there were positive developments along a number of lines, especially in the area of democratic reform, there were also sufficient indications that Africa still faced profound political problems that could result in massive population displacement. Indeed, some of the countries could not perform the quintessential task of maintaining law and order within their borders. Added to these countries, which are often classified as “failed states”, were a number of others that could be categorized as “wounded” because of the weakness of their central structures and their consequent difficulty in coping with pressure. The table below shows a rough categorization of the conflict status of sub-Saharan Africa as at the end of 2000.⁷

<i>Countries faced with armed conflict</i>	<i>Countries under severe political crisis and turbulence</i>	<i>Countries enjoying more or less stable political condition</i>
Angola	Cameroon	Benin
Burundi	Comoros	Botswana
Central African Republic	Côte d’Ivoire	Burkina Faso
Chad	Djibouti	Cape Verde
Congo Brazzaville	Equatorial Guinea	Gabon
DRC	Eritrea	Mali
Guinea	Ethiopia	Mauritania
Kenya	Gambia	Mauritius
Lesotho	Ghana	Mozambique
Liberia	Madagascar	Namibia
Rwanda	Malawi	SãoTomé and Príncipe
Senegal	Niger	Seychelles
Sierra Leone	Nigeria	South Africa
Somalia	Togo	Swaziland
Sudan	Zambia	Tanzania
Uganda	Zimbabwe	

⁶ Many scholars have discussed this subject. See, for example, Bujra, A., *African Conflicts: A Discussion of Their Causes and Their Political and Social Environment*, Addis Ababa: ECA, 2000

⁷ Updated from Adedeji, A. (ed.), *Comprehending and Mastering African Conflicts: The Search for Sustainable Peace and Good Governance*, London: Zed Books, 1999, p. 5

2.3. Structural Changes in Pattern of Warfare and the Blurred Distinction Between “Warfare” and “Banditry”

By the beginning of the new millennium, the pattern of warfare in Africa had undergone significant changes, of a nature that would impact on the future of human displacement in conflict. Again, the changes that have come in this respect have been the subject of several studies,⁸ leaving us here to identify the new actors and their pattern. While the immediate post-independence conflicts were between national armed forces, with mercenaries and guerrillas more the exception than the rule, four strong actors had emerged by the end of the 20th century. These were national armed forces, armed guerrilla gangs, warlords, and mercenaries. In some conflicts, all these actors have operated alongside each other, with catastrophic consequences for the country and the civilian population.⁹ However, what has been most worrisome is the conflict agenda of these actors. More often than not, national armies ended up splitting along ethnic and other primordial loyalties and they were known to exploit conflicts for personal gains. They had also become less disciplined, sometimes attacking civilians and staff of relief agencies. Armed factions, too, had the motive of benefiting materially from conflicts. What, however, made their activities more disturbing is their lack of respect for the rules governing the conduct of armed conflict, especially those concerning the protection of the civilian population. Warlords, on their part, were specifically inclined to exploit natural resources for political and economic gains,¹⁰ while mercenaries continued their traditional role of taking monetary payment for their services.¹¹ In resource-endowed countries, payment was sometimes made in kind.¹² The devastation caused by all this has been further worsened by the easy availability of small arms in many African conflicts. In the context of this paper, the most important outcome of all the changes is the devastation that has been caused to segments of the society that have been historically shielded during conflicts.

2.4. Changing role of Regional Organizations in Conflict Management

Whilst regional organizations have historically played a role in managing conflicts in Africa, their involvement had changed significantly by the time the 20th century came to an end. The traditional practices of diplomacy and mediation were gradually being replaced by physical presence in conflict zones. This new determination was best demonstrated by the role of these organizations in peacekeeping activities. After the bold, even if controversial, attempt by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to bring peace to Liberia, and later Sierra Leone, other regional organizations sharpened their conflict resolution

⁸ See, for example, De Waal, A., *Contemporary Warfare in Africa: Changing Context, Changing Strategies*, *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 27, No. 23, 1996; Oyebade, A. and A. Alao (eds.), *Africa after the Cold War: The Changing Perspective on Security*, Trenton: African World Press, 1999

⁹ One such conflict is the Sierra Leone civil war, where the national army, the rebel force, different militia groups and mercenaries from South Africa and Britain all operated. See Berdal, M. and D. Malone (eds.), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000

¹⁰ See Reno, W., *Warlord Politics and African States*, Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998

¹¹ See Musah, A. F. and J. K. Fayemi, *Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma*, London: Pluto Press, 1999

¹² Examples of these are the civil wars in Angola and Sierra Leone. See Alao, A., *Diamonds are Forever... But So Also Are Controversies: Diamonds and the Actors in the Sierra Leone Civil War*, *Journal of Civil Wars*, Autumn, 1999

mechanisms.¹³ The Southern African Development Community (SADC), for example, began processes that consolidated the dichotomy between the economic and security segments of the organization,¹⁴ while other regions sought ways of re-activating moribund institutions to meet regional security challenges. Some countries also assumed the responsibility of shouldering the security responsibility of their respective regions. This was the case with Nigeria in West Africa and South Africa in southern Africa. All these attempts were predicated on the assumption that regional bodies, because of their closeness to the theatre of conflict, were apt to be more effective than the Organization of African Unity (OAU), whose relative ineffectiveness in this regard was attributed, in part, to its geographical distance to most centres of conflict. While this has not made the organization completely irrelevant to addressing conflicts, it has reduced its role to that of co-ordinating the activities of regional organizations. Across the continent, the role of the regional organizations has been crucial to addressing some of the consequences of conflict, especially as they relate to human displacement. In virtually all conflicts, agencies working on human displacement have had to work, even if sometimes uneasily, with regional organizations.

2.5. Increasing Role of NGOs

Non-governmental organizations had also become very prominent in Africa by the time the new decade began, and as would be expected, many of them were assisting in addressing the needs of those displaced by conflict. NGOs come in two different forms - national and international. Local NGOs have come in forcefully in attempts to end conflict and in post-conflict peace building. However, the activities of the international organizations have been sometimes controversial, and, consequently, their role in conflict management and disaster relief had become major political issues. The controversy here has been linked to a number of factors, including allegations of partiality on the part of international NGOs, the politicization of relief distribution and insensitivity to local traditions and idiosyncrasies. Two examples of this problem are worthy of note. In Rwanda, the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) government expelled about 40 international NGOs, mostly French, in 1994, for roles allegedly inimical to the Rwandan national interest. These NGOs were accused of taking sides on the part of the ousted government and of having been accomplices, even if unintentionally, in the genocide. This is a charge the NGOs denied emphatically. A second example was in Liberia, where, at one stage during the conflict, the regional peacekeeping force, the Economic Community Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), accused some of the international NGOs of supporting one of the rebel forces.¹⁵ In short, the picture at the beginning of the period under review was an increased, even if sometimes controversial role for international NGOs in addressing African conflicts and their devastating consequences, especially human displacement.

¹³ See Olonisakin, F., *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and Legal Issues in ECOMOG Peacekeeping Operation*, The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2000

¹⁴ For more on this, see Van Aardt, M., The SADC Organ for Politics, Defence and Security: Challenges for Regional Security Building, *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Winter 1997; Cilliers, J., The SADC Organ for Defence, Politics and Security, *ISS Occasional Paper*, No. 10, Pretoria, October 1996

¹⁵ The rebel force in question was the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). For more on this, see, A. Alao, *The Burden of Collective Goodwill: The International Involvement in the Liberian Civil War*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 1998

2.6. Enhanced Role for the United Nations and Its Agencies

Also worth noting is the enhanced role the United Nations and some of its agencies are playing in Africa at the present time. Two of these ways are particularly important. The first is the involvement of the UN in peacekeeping activities in Africa. Again, while this dates back to 1963, with the involvement of the organization in the Congo, the 1990 decade witnessed a number of operations in the continent.¹⁶ Indeed, by the time the decade ended, UN peacekeeping activities had become a feature of conflict management in the continent. In some cases like Liberia and Sierra Leone, the UN forces worked together with the regional peacekeeping force. However, like the international NGOs, the UN too had some moments in its relationship with Africa. Rwanda again presents the best example of this. Here, the UN allegedly mismanaged a peacekeeping operation and thus accounted, in part at least, for the extent of the genocide that killed up to a million Rwandan Tutsis. Another criticism often levelled against the UN is that the resources it devotes to African peacekeeping activities is often small, compared to what is committed to other regions, even though the scale of the emergency is greater. The other way the UN had become involved in Africa was through the activities of the organization's agencies, which again had increased because of the upsurge in the number of complex emergencies in Africa. This, too, had controversial ramifications, albeit accompanied by less stringent criticisms than those against the UN itself and international NGOs. Instead the constant criticism has always been that action has been too little, too late.

From the above survey of where Africa was positioned at the beginning of the new millennium, it could be seen that much had changed from the situation in the immediate post-independence era. The causes of conflict had changed, as had the mechanisms for handling them.¹⁷ Indeed, it can be said that by the time the new millennium began, Africa had closed a chapter, but was yet to completely open another one in its defence and security framework. This had an impact on the nature and consequences of conflict, including the pattern and extent of human displacement. The next section of this paper considers the key themes that are likely to underlie defence and security in the continent in the next two years.

3. Key Determinants of Conflicts in Africa 2001 - 2002

Even before the last decade of the 20th century ended, indications were already clear as to the future directions of security in Africa. Although the end of the Cold War had brought changes to the continent's security outlook, the typology of possibilities still reflects some continuity. For the purpose of this paper, seven factors have been identified as possible determinants of conflict in the next two years. These are:

¹⁶ Among these are Namibia (1989-1990), Western Sahara (1991), Somalia (1992), Mozambique (1992) and Rwanda (1993)

¹⁷ See Solomon, H. and M. Van Aardt (eds.), 'Caring' Security in Africa: Theoretical and Practical Considerations of New Security Thinking, *ISS Monograph Series*, No. 20, Pretoria, February 1998

- complexities associated with the management of existing conflicts;
- the politics surrounding the management of natural resources;
- unresolved democratic problems;
- agitation for self-determination;
- the fragility of socio-economic structures;
- the effects of violent ethno-nationalism; and
- the future of post-conflict amnesty.

Depending on how they are managed and the national and regional circumstances that colour their expression, the conflicts emanating from these are likely to determine human displacement in Africa in the course of 2001 and 2002. Again, it needs to be stated that all these determinants are intrinsically linked.

3.1. Managing the Changing Manifestations of Existing Conflicts

In the course of 2001 and 2002, the most important determinant of peace and security in Africa is likely to be how existing conflicts manifest themselves and how successful the efforts at resolving them are. This is also likely to be the main determinant of population displacement. The main conflicts here are those in Sierra Leone and the entire Mano River Union, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Angola. Although the details of these are discussed in the next section, it needs to be mentioned here that among the issues that account for the changing phases of these conflicts are the effects of globalization. Some of these are worthy of note, especially as they have been neglected in most recent studies on African conflicts. These are the revolution in information technology, the improvement in the means of transportation and the consequences of the deregulation in global economy, all of which have impacted on African conflicts, especially those focusing on natural resources. For example, with the revolution in information technology, it has become easier for information to be exchanged between capitals, and warlords dealing in natural resources have found it easy to extend their contacts across the world. Thus, the depletion of natural resources during conflict gets unintended accomplices in the ease with which armed groups and warlords get prospective buyers from developed Western markets. The improvement in the means of transportation, on its part, has also made it easy for people and natural resources to be transported during conflict, while the deregulation of the global economy manifests itself, amongst other ways, in the ease with which money can be transferred around the world. This has been exploited by criminal gangs, especially those dealing with natural resources, and the speed with which this is done makes it difficult to control. It needs, however, to be noted that the effects of globalization on conflict are not always negative. Indeed, there are cases where there can be positive aspects, as can be seen in the speed with which sanctions can be imposed on recalcitrant factions and the ease with which peacekeeping forces can be deployed. All these are likely to play important roles in the manifestation of conflicts, and in the next chapter attempts will be made to discuss how these may take shape in different African regions.

3.2. The Politics of Natural Resource Management

It now seems certain that the politics surrounding the management of natural resources, especially how this intertwines with the issue of governance, is set to be the main determinant of Africa's stability in the new century. This is not only because the deep economic crisis facing the continent is likely to put further strain on its environmental supply base, thus further weakening the structures of governance, but also because the increasing awareness on the part of the civil society is likely to make it more determined in its demands for accountability in the management of natural resources. Already, conflicts having major bearings on natural resources are dominating attention in the continent: diamonds in Sierra Leone and Angola, timber in Liberia, oil in Nigeria, water in the Horn of Africa, etc., have all torn communities apart in internecine conflicts. Indeed, the war in the DRC, which by the end of 1999 had enveloped seven African nations, is widely believed to be rooted in the country's enormous resource endowment. The land crisis in Zimbabwe, too, coming just in the first few months of the new millennium, would seem to have further confirmed the major role resource-politics is poised to take in the new century.

As has been witnessed in the last decade, there is now a fundamental shift in the nature of resource related conflicts in Africa. While the traditional assumption is predicated by the neo-Malthusian philosophy that the *scarcity* of natural resources is at the roots of problems, many of Africa's recent conflicts have been linked to natural resource *abundance*, as can be seen in countries like Sierra Leone, Angola and the DRC. This is likely to continue well into the next decade, but the conflicts will no longer be limited to major natural resources like gold, diamonds, etc., but will also include disputes over land, pastoralism, sea-resources and water, where issues of ownership and control are likely to lie behind many conflicts.

3.3. Continued Clamour for Democratic Reform

Although the "wind of change" has blown away some manifestations of autocracy in Africa, there are a number of countries where forms of dictatorship still thrive, especially in the form of one-party rule. There are also cases where multi-party democracy has been abused, with parties in power exploiting the advantage of incumbency to stifle opposition. Political leaders in power are also changing the constitution to allow them extended periods in office. Efforts to ensure genuine democracy will be a major security issue in the next two years. How this manifests itself will vary, with national and regional peculiarities introducing variations, but the likely pattern is for the struggle for democratic reform to assume a militant dimension once efforts to change the political situation through peaceful means fail. Already, the socio-economic situation in many of the countries provides an atmosphere where such violence can thrive, and some of their consequences would transcend beyond the borders of the affected countries. Conflicts in this category are likely to place greater strain on the OAU and other regional organizations, as the organizations could find it increasingly difficult to strike a balance between legitimate domestic agitation for reform, and the wish to respect the authority of the incumbent administration.

Also to come under considerable criticism in the next few years is the role of external forces, especially the numerous international “monitoring groups” overseeing elections across the continent. Concern as regards the authenticity of their judgement is growing, especially as they often arrive in the country just a few days before the election. Critics argue that the judgement of these groups is based on the actual conduct of the election, and not on the pre-election activities of governments in power, tending to disenfranchise significant populations known to harbour anti-government views. In the next two years, the “clean bill of health” often issued to incumbent governments may serve as an excuse to further suppress legitimate opposition.

3.4. Agitation for Self Determination

The freedom of expression that came with democratic change has also increased the agitation for self-determination. In many of these cases, the agitation had been going on since independence but only had its tempo increased with the end of the Cold War. It, of course, goes without saying that at the root of the problem were the vicissitudes of colonial division, which brought diverse ethnic and social units together. But in many recent cases, issues like the desire for greater control in the management of natural resources and the alleged marginalization by dominant ethnic groups have increased the grounds for self-determination agitation. All indications point to the fact that this is likely to be the case in the next couple of years.

3.5. Fragility of Socio-economic Structure

Apart from being a key theme underlining conflict, the fragility of Africa’s socio-economic structure will thread through a number of political issues that will unfold in Africa in the next decade. An issue that comes to play here is the removal of subsidies on important commodities and other negative effects of SAP. Because of the economic difficulties that characterized the affairs of the continent in the last few decades, the social structures that had governed inter-group and cultural relations have been destroyed. Even the traditional African love for neighbours is fast eroding in the face of economic difficulties, resulting in the dwindling of sympathy and affection for displaced populations. Also affected is the traditionally high threshold of forgivingness, such as that underlying the reconciliation efforts after civil wars in Nigeria, Mozambique and even recently in South Africa. Reconciling armed groups is now becoming difficult, especially as the greed and grievance of warring factions in conflicts can not be addressed under the prevailing weak economic and social structures. In the next couple of years, the pressure from this will almost certainly be a background factor in many conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa.

3.6. Violent Ethno-nationalism

Although this has only recently become a factor, and its impact is still limited to specific areas where attempts at federation are still unstable, the countries affected are of such great regional importance that a refugee flood could destabilize their respective regions. The pattern here is for ethnic groups within the affected countries to evoke a rabid patriotism that advances the interest of their group to the detriment of the others. In most cases, this tendency feeds on the political history of the country, especially where a specific ethnic group gains (or regains) political power after a period of perceived or real marginalization.

Such an expression also finds reinforcement in the prevailing social and economic developments in the affected countries. The violence in these cases has resulted in major population displacement within the country, and, depending on how its future manifestations are addressed, has the potential of having their consequences spread to neighbouring states.

3.7. “General Amnesty” or “General Amnesia”? Impending Controversy for the Future.

How the issue of amnesty is handled will constitute a major security issue in the next two years and even beyond. While some governments would prefer a situation where a general amnesty is granted in order to improve the chances of reconciliation, it is not certain whether the international community and the affected population in the countries concerned would accept this condition. For example, in Sierra Leone, while the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement granted a general amnesty to the rebel force, the UN seems to have made it clear that members of the rebel organization could be arrested and tried for war crimes if they travel outside the country. This contrasts with Uganda, where the blanket amnesty granted to members of the three anti-government forces seems to have been recognized. In short, how cases of past injustices are addressed would be a major determinant of enduring peace and stability in sub-Saharan Africa.

4. Regional Idiosyncrasies and Security Risk Patterns in 2001-2002

This section discusses how the above themes are likely to manifest themselves in different African regions. Adopting a regional approach to discussing security in Africa is fast becoming popular, especially as many African conflicts and efforts aimed at resolving them are increasingly becoming regional concerns. In each of the regions, this paper looks at the countries that can determine the human movement and the peculiar themes in the regions

4.1. West Africa

In one of the curious ironies of African politics, West Africa, which was relatively stable in the immediate post-independence decades, had by the end of the millennium become one of its most turbulent, presenting the UNHCR and other agencies with some of their worst challenges. Unfortunately, it is most likely that the problem will remain in the course of 2001-2002, with very little change. While success may attend some of the efforts to address the main conflicts, the legacies and the fall-outs from them will remain for quite some time to come, and their destructive capacities would be no less devastating. Below is a review of some of the key cases.

4.1.1. Mano River Union Countries

For most of the years 2001 and 2002, the bulk of attention in West Africa would remain focused on the Mano River Union, enveloping Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. Already the instability within the Union has resulted in the displacement of several hundred thousands. One reason why the problem in the Mano River Union is complicated is that, most of the time, the three countries have shared responsibilities and risks in extremely disproportionate ways: the core conflict for now is in Sierra Leone; the main actor in the conflict is Liberia, while the burden of taking care of those displaced is on Guinea. The problem has been

further complicated by the initial lack of an all-encompassing approach to resolve the Sierra Leone conflict. For a long time, efforts were concentrated on the political and military problems in Sierra Leone, without considering the wider regional ramifications of conflict and risks. For example, while the hidden hand of Charles Taylor had always been suspected, it was not until 2000 that the international community went beyond the platitudinous calls on Liberia to stop the support. Neither was anything done to fortify Guinea's disaster preparedness. It should thus not be surprising that the situation has become difficult to address.

In the next two years, developments in the three countries would determine the extent to which further population displacement can be expected. It is possible for some positive developments to take place in Sierra Leone, but it would be naïve to expect that there would be a noticeable development that would end the conflict. The benefits coming from the mining of the country's diamonds are of such enormity that the actors would be reluctant to stop. But even a political end of the conflict between the Government and the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) will only bring a crude semblance of stability. The road to effective recovery will be long and difficult, especially as it would have to be done against a very slender budget and apparent donor fatigue. Indeed, it is the case that every phase of this difficult recovery process has the potential of returning the country and the region back to conflict. What, however, gives major cause for concern are the apparent ineffectiveness of the disarmament and demobilization process, the fractionalization of the RUF, the massive proliferation of small arms, the culture of conflict that is now becoming endemic and the general socio-economic deprivation that could frustrate any search for enduring peace.

Equally important in the equation is the prospect of the forthcoming election in Sierra Leone. President Kabbah's term was supposed to have ended in March 2001, but it has now been extended to ensure that greater peace comes to the country before an election is conducted. President Kabbah has indicated his desire for a second term, and the RUF too is expected to transform into a political party. The crucial question now is whether the RUF would accept the outcome of the election if it loses. There are strong chances that the movement would allege electoral irregularities to explain any electoral defeat. Already members of the movement might be hoping that its past intimidation would force people to vote it into power, thereby preventing recourse to war - the kind of scenario that explains, in part at least, Taylor's electoral victory in Liberia. The situation in Sierra Leone is, however, different, and expecting an electoral victory because of people's fear of a return to all-out violence can only end in disappointment, which in turn could encourage recourse to greater violence.

Attention in the next two years will be on Guinea, as the country engages in the twin tasks of contending with refugees from other countries and handling its own internal instability. Guinea appears determined to prosecute its war against the rebel forces attacking its borders with vigour, and all indications from the country show that it does not want any involvement of the regional peacekeeping force. Indeed, none of the options available to Guinea is a palatable one. Any attempt to adopt a military option could be long and protracted. Although the country has the strongest military force among the Mano River Union countries, the reservoir of recruits available to rebel forces is enormous. With more than a decade of conflict, the Mano River Union is littered with individuals with tested combat experience that can swell any rebel force. Even if the Government reconsiders its

position and accepts ECOMOG, it is not known whether the force would be willing to add Guinea fully to its list of commitments.

For the next two years, Liberia will be saddled with the dual tasks of convincing a sceptical world that it has given up support to the rebel movement in Sierra Leone, and of addressing the activities of anti-government forces. President Taylor has not brought on board all the rivals that fought in the civil war. Although he has so far been able to browbeat the population into conformity, how long he can go on without getting his former enemies on board is another question. Already, there is a growing insurgent group in the northern part of the country, where people from the Madingo ethnic group, major opponents of Taylor during the civil war, are believed to be arming. The regional ramification of this is also worthy of note, especially as the ethnic group involved, the Madingos, have historical links with Guinea.

Another likely cause for concern is the July 2002 national elections. President Taylor has made it clear that he would be contesting the election. Although he is not likely to face any major challenge, the extent to which he stifles opposition may be an important determinant of stability in the country. If there are cases of victimization, opposition members may leave the country and join the growing anti-Taylor elements in the region. All these spell a bad prognosis for the country and the entire Mano River Union.

The international pressure on Liberia is likely to bring about a slightly less adventurous foreign policy, especially if heavier sanctions are imposed on the country. It is, indeed, likely that President Taylor will stop his support for the RUF, but there are dangers, too, that other independent channels of support may be created, thereby enabling the organization to remain a key beneficiary of Liberian support. There is also the possibility that dissident forces may rise against the Taylor administration in Liberia. Although the devastating consequences of this possibility may not be reflected in the next two years, it is possible that the idea of a formation of armed groups may emerge during this period. The extent of anti-Taylor sentiments within the region makes this action a distinct possibility. If this happens, it is bound to complicate the refugee problem in the region. On the whole, however, it is very likely that the Mano River Union countries will remain unstable through the course of 2001 and 2002 and the international community should brace itself for the challenge.

4.1.2. Nigeria

Nigeria is far more vulnerable than many citizens of the country are willing to agree. While it is almost certain that a civil conflict is not going to happen in the country in the next two years, a number of internal ethnic and religious conflicts are very likely, and these may result in cases of internal displacement. The ethno-nationalist violence that has seen the emergence of many armed gangs is likely to create more conflicts as the country approaches the next election year in 2003. The religious crisis in the northern part of the country, heightened with the imposition of *shari'a* law in some of the northern states, is already creating tension, with those opposed to the law migrating southwards. All these factors are likely to result in population displacements, but they are almost certainly going to be internal, without any assistance required from the UNHCR or any other similar agencies. The situation in the Niger Delta is equally important. This portion of the country is still unstable, although not as it was during the feudal tyranny of the Abacha years when many of the people became refugees in the neighbouring Benin Republic. Another major return of violence to the Niger

Delta might result in population displacement, although it should be added that this is not very likely, even if it can not be completely ruled out.

Major civil conflict in Nigeria would have at least two devastating consequences for the region. First, the leading role the country has played in the region, especially in conflict management, would be lost, at least for some time, as domestic concerns would have to supersede regional commitment. Second, the extent of the displacement would be so massive that the region would find it difficult to cope. With a population of more than a hundred million, the scale of refugee flows would be potentially catastrophic.

4.1.3. Côte d'Ivoire

While Côte d'Ivoire might have shown the best example yet of "people power" with the uprising against General Guei's attempts to metamorphose into civilian leadership, there are some issues that need to be addressed. Perhaps the most important is the possibility of some form of armed opposition against the Government, especially from members of the armed forces that remain loyal to the ousted military government. Indeed, some key political problems in the country have not been addressed, and it is likely that some of these would emerge in the next few years. Previous governments, especially those of President Henri Konan Bédié and General Robert Guei, had divided the country to such an extent that the multi-ethnic and hitherto uniquely stable society seems to have gone. The controversies surrounding the status of Alassane Quattara in the previous elections are indicative of a society finding it difficult to harmonize the contradictions of its diverse constituencies. This has again been compounded by the difficulties of managing the multi-national dimensions of the Ivorian state. With a significant percentage of foreigners in the country, how the country handles its foreign population is becoming a key political issue. Already there are complaints coming from foreign residents, especially the Burkinabes, and many of them have had to leave Côte d'Ivoire. If internal problems in Côte d'Ivoire result in the formation of any armed group, ready sympathy could come from disaffected returnees. With that part of West Africa already infested with arms and armed groups, getting assistance and encouragement to begin or sustain an armed rebellion is not going to be difficult. It is hoped, however, that Côte d'Ivoire will not join the unpleasant list of the West African countries that have displaced a significant percentage of their population.

4.1.4. Senegal

Since 1982, the *Mouvement des forces démocratiques de la Casamance* (MFDC) has been fighting for self-determination in the Casamance region, which is a piece of territory sandwiched between Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. Senegal has accused both countries of providing support for the rebel force, especially because of the kinship ties they have with both countries. However, the participation of these two countries is indispensable to the resolution of the conflict, a fact that was overlooked in the recent attempt in March 2001 to reach a peace agreement between the Government and MFDC. This agreement, which achieved a ceasefire, does not address the contentious issue of the status of the Casamance. Thus, as after earlier failed peace agreements, the most recent being 1991, the Casamance problem is bound to continue and probably bring in its neighbours.

4.1.5. Guinea Bissau, Togo, Ghana, Benin, and Niger: Domestic Political Tension and Internal Displacement

Apart from those already discussed, there are a number of countries where there are high risks of domestic political problems that could result in conflict. In these cases, the domestic political situation could align with socio-economic deprivation to result in conflicts of overwhelming proportions. Countries that come to mind in this respect include Togo, where there are still minor problems in some sections of the country, Guinea Bissau, where the unrest in the army has not been effectively contained, and Niger Republic, facing the consequences of the assassination of the former military strongman, General Ibrahim Masarawa. Other countries where domestic issues could emerge include Benin Republic, where the refusal of former President Soglo to contest the run-off with President Kerekou does indicate an unpleasant development. Unless these conflicts turn out to have regional dimensions, it is not likely that they would result in massive population displacement, but they are important developments to monitor.

4.2. Great Lakes Region¹⁸

The Rwandan genocide ignited the world's attention to the problem in the Great Lakes, just as the attendant refugee crisis showed how catastrophic human displacement problems could be. These events took place in 1994, and almost a decade on, the situation in the region still remains unstable, and the next two years do not give any indication that the problem will be completely solved. For the Great Lakes region, the conflicts that are likely to result in human displacement are those in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Rwanda, Congo and Uganda.

4.2.1. Unfolding Developments in the DRC

The death of President Laurent Kabila has introduced a new dimension to the conflict in the DRC. The developments in the next two years will depend on how the new leader manages the complexities facing the country. Although President Joseph Kabila has promised to honour the Lusaka accord, it is not as yet clear how matters will develop. The real problem in the DRC is that, since independence, there had never been any attempt to build a united nation, and attachment to ethnic and other primordial sentiments has always superseded that to the nation. It is the regional ramifications of these sentiments that explain the ease with which neighbours interfered in the current round of the country's conflict. It would be naïve to expect that the conflict in the DRC would disappear, no matter how conciliatory the new leadership is. However, the human tragedies associated with it, especially human displacement, will be drastically reduced if the Lusaka Agreement succeeds. The chances of a more enduring resolution would be enhanced if efforts are made to re-focus attention on the domestic ramifications of the conflict.

¹⁸ I have included Uganda in this section, rather than under discussions on East Africa where it geographically belongs because of other issues that bring the country together with others in the Great Lakes region.

In the last few years, more attention has been on the regional aspects. While this is important, especially against the background of the complexities of the international involvement and the hidden expectations of personal advantage behind it, it should be remembered that the war also has distinct domestic causes that are as important as the regional ramifications. This domestic concern has also been a contributory factor in human displacement. The UN force going into the country has started facing serious difficulties, especially as there are protests from the local population as to the relevance and role of the force. How effective they can be will depend on the extent to which they are accepted and recognized by the local population and the main actors in the conflict. What is however more disturbing is the recent killing of some aid workers in the country. This is likely to reduce sympathy for the displaced population, as the security situation may prevent aid agencies from going into many sections of the country.

The new president is trying to bring a meaningful end to the crisis, but it seems early as yet to be overwhelmed with any feeling of euphoria. In the next two years, President Joseph Kabila will be torn between many conflicting choices, but the most profound will be to decide which should be addressed first, the internal or the external ramifications of the conflict. It would appear, though, that he will have to juggle both side by side for some time to come. On the whole, the verdict on the DRC is that, while there may be no light yet at the end of the tunnel, it is certainly not getting darker.

4.2.2. Uganda

The next two years are likely to be crucial for Uganda. Already opposition against President Museveni is becoming more organized and pronounced. Presently, there are three armed groups active against the Government, and despite military attempts at addressing the conflicts, these groups still remain a major security concern for the country and the region. The allegations of corruption against key government officials, the unpopularity of the involvement in the DRC and a number of other problems resulted in a major political challenge against President Museveni in the last election. Although the President won by 69 per cent, the allegations of victimization of opponents forced many government critics to go into exile. It is not known as yet whether these exile elements would come together to organize a rebellion against the government in Kampala, but the increasing number of opponents should be a growing cause of concern.

4.2.3. Rwanda-Uganda

Another serious cause of concern is the deteriorating relationship between Rwanda and Uganda. These former allies have seen their relationship worsen in the last few years when both supported rebel groups in their attempt to oust the late President Kabila in the DRC. The most significant aspects of this worsening relationship were the conflicts that took place between the two in Kisangani.¹⁹ With both countries now getting out of the DRC, even if slowly, it would seem that the battle lines have been drawn much closer home. During the last few months the relationship has continued to worsen, to such an extent that an all-out war between the two countries is now a distinct possibility. Indeed, in April 2001, Uganda listed Rwanda and the DRC as hostile countries. Already, there are rumours of troop

¹⁹ So far, there have been three major conflicts in the mineral-rich city of Kisangani between Rwanda and Uganda.

deployments along the common borders, although both sides have denied this. In the event of the occurrence of conflict, there would almost certainly be a significant population displacement in the entire region. The greater danger however comes from the different rebel movements in both countries that might want to exploit such a conflict to destabilize both countries. The RPF government in Rwanda has not effectively solved the problem of the *interahamwes*,²⁰ and with a favourable atmosphere and external assistance these people would launch another attack on the government in Kigali. Uganda, as mentioned above, has different groups opposed to the Museveni government, and all would want to exploit any all-out conflict between the country and Rwanda to attack the government in Kampala.

4.2.4. Congo Brazzaville

The conflict in Congo Brazzaville is another that could result in possible population displacement, especially if it feeds deeper into the general instability in the region. With the war in the DRC attracting greater attention, there is the danger that Congo Brazzaville will fade into obscurity, resulting in the sides in the conflict disrupting the lives of innocent civilians. To a large extent, the developments in the next two years will depend on the political dialogue going on in the country. The exile opposition still has a role to play in the future of the country, and it has to be brought on board for any meaningful dialogue.

4.2.5. Burundi

The April 2001 coup attempt in Burundi shows how unstable the next two years could be for the country. The future of the Mandela-led peace initiative is still uncertain and any development, such as the abortive coup attempt, can trigger a string of events in the country, with considerable difficulty for the entire Great Lakes. There is the need too to ensure that there are no further infiltrations of young Hutu fighters from refugee camps in Tanzania. In short, the deep political and ethnic problems in the country are a major cause for concern.

4.2.6. Uganda, Kenya and Sudan: Pastoralism and Cross-border Conflicts

Cross-border conflicts between the pastoralists in the region will almost certainly continue for quite some time to come, and ethnic groups like the Karamajong in Uganda, Turkanas in Kenya and Toposa in Sudan are likely to remain in the news. These conflicts have been going on for decades, and they in themselves are not likely to cause population displacement. There are, however, greater dangers when these conflicts align with other domestic problems, as it is now suspected in Sudan. It is now believed that the Dodoth Karamajongs have linked up with the Didinga ethnic group, a group that fell out with the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) of Southern Sudan. All the groups are known to be armed with sophisticated weapons and the inability of their respective governments to control this has been a major problem.

4.3. East and Horn of Africa

Although there is not likely to be a replay of the major conflicts that brought the Horn of Africa to the forefront of international attention in respect of the refugee crisis in the 1980s,

²⁰ *Interahamwe* means “those who kill together”. It is the name used to describe the supporters of the old Rwandan government and those who took part in the genocide.

the next two years may witness some conflicts that could ignite population movement. Some positive developments in the region should, however, be noted. These include the developments in Ethiopian-Eritrean relations and the developments inside Somalia. Although these are very welcome developments, it is still too early to be sanguine. Assistance should be given to all the sides involved to ensure that the peace is made to last. However, areas of concern now include Sudan, the future of Ethiopian-Somalian relations, Kenya, and the management of communal resources.

4.3.1. Sudan

Sudan appears to be the country with the most intractable civil conflict in the Horn. This picture is not likely to change in the next two years. The civil conflict between the North and the South is most likely to continue, and so are some of its attendant implications. The only situation that might alter this picture is if success attends some of the efforts now being made to resolve the conflict. Not many analysts will be confident, though, that this is a possibility, and it is most likely that the situation may become worse before it becomes better. What further makes human displacement more complex in the Sudan is the ways the war in the country has led to famine. There have been cases of this in the past. For example the severe famine in the South between 1986 and 1989 was caused by the destructive activities of the Government and the SPLA. If the on-going war further displaces people from farming, the resultant famine would further displace the population. Already the BBC News on 29 March 2001 warned of an impending famine in the Sudan.

The politics of oil has further raised the stakes in the civil conflict, and both sides have claimed further justifications for their causes. Indeed, it seems that oil has energized a civil war that was getting tired after almost two decades. The SPLA has recently threatened to attack foreigners working on oil fields, and the Government has sworn to protect the installations and the foreign workers. This and other developments surrounding the politics of oil extraction can only increase the complexities surrounding the civil conflict in the Sudan.

4.3.2. Ethiopia and Somalia

Although the relationship between Ethiopia and Somalia appears reasonably stable for now, there are still a number of problems associated with this phase of transition in the relationship. For example, it is possible that Ethiopia may want to exploit the weakness of Somalia's internal structures to gain advantage over the country. Already, there have been allegations that Ethiopia is trying to encroach on Somalia's territory. It is early as yet to know how things will unfold in this regard.

4.3.3. Kenya

The future of Kenya after President Moi potentially poses a danger for the country and the region. More often than not, there are in-built problems after the prolonged rule of any leader, especially in Africa where the structures are fragile. There are a number of considerations that make Kenya particularly vulnerable. First, although a multi-party state, the country has operated more or less as a one-party state. This has many implications for the army which would have to adjust to a post-Moi phase. Indeed, it is almost certain that more than 75 per cent of the army have only served under a single president. How the Army reacts to a possible defeat of the governing party, Kenya African National Union (KANU), in the next election will go a long way towards determining the future of the country. Even if KANU wins the election, how the party handles the possible succession crisis is important in determining the future direction of the military. Second, the “de-Moi-ization” that is likely to come with a change in leadership will meet opposition from those who had enjoyed considerable patronage during the Moi years. In addition, there has been dissension over the years by different ethnic groups who allege unfair treatment during the Moi years. This is particularly the case with the Kikuyus, one of Kenya’s largest ethnic groups, who have persistently accused President Moi and his ethnic group, the Kalenjin, of victimization.

4.3.4. Sudan and Its Neighbours: The Politics of Managing the Nile River

Sudan is also likely to have an uneasy relationship with some of its neighbours over the control of the Nile River. This is already becoming a cause of concern in the region, with Ethiopia leading a number of disaffected countries over the management of the Nile and its basins. While this conflict may not become manifest in the next two years, there is a distinct possibility that conflict over the management of the Nile River would result in some conflicts within the next decade if no acceptable solution is found.

4.3.5. Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan

The developments in the Horn in the course of 2001 and 2002 will also depend on how the relationship between these three countries is handled, and how the relationship affects the domestic situation in some of these countries, especially Sudan. Although there is now a crude semblance of peace in the relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea, there are still potential grounds for conflict. What is likely to further compound human displacement problems is if famine or other environmental crises feed on the unstable security situation.

4.4. Southern Africa

Even at the peak of its numerous civil conflicts, Southern Africa produced relatively smaller number of refugees compared with other regions faced with a similar plight. Once the region got over the series of wars of liberation in the 1970s, the flow of displaced people reduced significantly. Although the wars that subsequently engulfed Mozambique and Angola created refugees and internally displaced people, other characteristics of the wars gave them greater notoriety than the refugee problems that came along with them. In short a number of considerations, especially the international condemnation of apartheid and the Cold War involvement in civil wars obscured the refugee dimension of conflict in Southern Africa. In the next two years, there are no serious indications of any increase in the number of conflicts that could result in population displacement.

4.4.1. Angola

This appears to be the only conflict that is likely to cause population displacement in the southern African region. It is likely that the Government will hold on to its slight advantage on the battlefield, especially as it is probable that the sanctions against União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) will continue to gain firmer ground. Although it would be naïve to assume that the sanctions will result in a quick end for UNITA, especially as the group has developed routes of continuing its trade in diamond gems, the sanctions have also affected the commercial basis that has supported its intransigence. If this conflict increases it is likely to continue its destabilization of the population.

4.4.2. Zimbabwe

Another country that is vulnerable is Zimbabwe. Three issues are important in this respect. First is the growing opposition against President Robert Mugabe, which is likely to be intensified as the next year election approaches. Already, President Mugabe has signified his intention to contest, and as the election comes closer, the security situation is likely to be explosive. There is the distinct possibility that the violent activities of the so-called “war-veterans” will continue further worsening the security situation. Second is the economic situation in the country, which continues to be precarious. Indeed, it is likely that the situation will become more difficult in the next few years, especially as President Mugabe’s domestic policies continue to attract criticism in some Western European capitals. The third is the handling of the troops that would ultimately have to return from the DRC. The return of the army to the serious economic situation in the country is a potential cause of concern. So far, the only reason that appears to keep Zimbabwe intact is that the military still remains loyal to President Mugabe, even if there is a growing domestic opposition. How long the military will stay loyal if on arrival from the DRC they experience the deep economic problems facing the rest of the population is what waits to be seen.

4.4.3. Tanzania

After decades of stability, Tanzania seems to be facing a serious political problem that could result in conflict. The developments in Zanzibar, where there has been a major uprising, show that the principle of “development through diversity” which has been Tanzania’s hallmark seems to be fading. Other minor problems in mainland Tanzania also add to the possibility of instability in the country. In the event of conflict in Tanzania, there would obviously be human displacement, although this may not be massive. However, when one considers the size of the present refugee population in the country, which at April 2001 stood at almost 700,000, peace in Tanzania is very crucial, as no other country in the region can provide a home for the refugee population currently living there.

4.4.4. Zambia

Problems may be looming in Zambia, where President Chiluba’s desire to seek another term in office seems to be creating political tension. Just recently, his Vice President dropped a subtle hint that the President should not attempt a second term. Again, it is early as yet to know how this will unfold, but it may not be completely off the mark to include Zambia as one of the countries that may face major political problems if its transition exercise is not properly handled. The balance of probability does not indicate that there would be a major conflict but it is such that developments should be monitored for possible future conflict.

5. Possible Themes in the Configuration of Displacement

This section seeks to address three distinct and inter-related issues. Firstly the factors that are likely to determine the movement patterns of those to be displaced by the above conflicts, should they arise; secondly the considerations that could determine how they are received in the places they migrate to; and thirdly the guidelines that would determine their ultimate return back to their original homes.

The natural tendency of fleeing to places considered safe will always remain the most important determinant of refugee movement anywhere in the world. However, it is likely that in the near future refugees might keep migrating even after they have left the immediate places of danger. This action is being predicated by the ease with which conflicts now spread to neighbouring areas that are often not in danger at the time of the original movement of the refugees. Refugees are also more inclined to seek a more settled atmosphere from where they can resettle and make clearer plans about their future. Again, they have come to realize how difficult indefinite staying in refugee camps can be, and as such are more inclined to go to places that appear more permanent. For example, refugees from Liberia are now going as far as Ghana. In short, in the years ahead, refugees are likely to begin considering, more than places of immediate safety, those where they can stay for much longer periods, if not, in fact, permanently. This becomes all the more likely because of the general instability that keeps making constant movement necessary. The factors that are likely to determine the place refugees migrate to are the political stability of the prospective country and the extent of its economic capability to cope. In Africa, countries like South Africa and Nigeria are likely to be prime targets under this new consideration. The two seem to have realized the burden that could fall on them and are coming together to find early solutions to threatening conflicts. Apart from the efforts they are both putting into ensuring stability in their respective regions, both countries are also joining forces to organize a broader framework for continental peace. The freedom of movement that is now becoming enshrined in many regional protocols is likely to facilitate the ease with which those displaced in conflicts move freely within regions.

Much has been said about the traditional hospitality of Africans, especially as it relates to accommodating and feeding those displaced by conflicts. While this is still existing, there is increasing evidence to support the fact that this much advertized traditional hospitality is not so much an enigmatic or inborn attitude as it is a matter of resource availability. There have been constant clashes between refugees and their hosts especially in connection with the management of natural resources and the failure of the immigrants to respect traditional values. The latest example of this clash can be seen in Ghana, where the local population clashed with Liberian refugees. In the next two years, this tendency is likely to continue, and it is indeed likely that more clashes would ensue between refugees and host communities. This prediction becomes all the more likely because of the continued increase in the number of refugees and the simultaneous decrease in the resources available in many African countries.

Efforts to get the refugees to go back home may continue to face difficulties because of the impossibility of guaranteeing them enduring peace back home. In the last few years, many refugees have seen peace agreements signed and broken to such an extent that they are not likely to be easily tempted to return home at the mere signing of any peace agreement. In Liberia, for example, up to 14 agreements were signed before there was a crude semblance of stability that gave way to the 1996 election. Sierra Leone has seen two agreements signed and broken with the same measure of expectation and hope, while Angola and the DRC have had major agreements thwarted. All these experiences have weakened the expectations of the population as regards the extent to which peace agreements are strong enough to be a reason for going back home. The long-term implication of this is a new settlement pattern in many African countries where there would be further dispersal of the refugee population, especially as inter-marriages may come after years of settlement in their new abode.

6. Conclusion

Massive population displacement in Africa in the next two years is not likely to depend on any single conflict, but more a situation where a conflict exploits the internal political situations in other countries to widen the scope of its expression. Already, this has been noticed in the case of the Mano River Union, where the war in Liberia turned out to have a domino effect on Sierra Leone, and, to an extent, Guinea, and in the Great Lakes, where the internal crisis in Rwanda resulted in a genocide that ultimately created a refugee migration unprecedented in the world. Indeed, to get a better picture of how population displacement could occur in the next two years, emphasis should move beyond the developments in each of the countries to discussing how independent conflicts might coalesce with others to result in population displacement.

On the whole, Africa will remain a source of concern for those looking at human displacement and other forms of complex emergencies emanating from conflict. As noted above, it is likely that some conflicts that could result in population displacement will occur within the next two years, while the period will also witness the gradual development of a number of issues that would become manifest subsequently. But while the continent's conflicts are likely to remain, it is likely, too, that concern from the international community would rise. In the years ahead, the assistance of UNHCR in managing the continent's refugee and displaced population is likely to receive encouragement and support from international NGOs, governments of developed countries, development institutions, and similar bodies. It is also likely that regional organizations would work closer with the UNHCR and other agencies working on displaced populations. All these, however, can only lighten the burden created by conflict-induced refugees. What appears to be the best long-term solution is to reduce the likelihood of such conflicts through the creation of a just and egalitarian society that is also democratic. For Africa, this is still a bit far off.

There is also the need for the international community to assist in addressing Africa's socio-economic problems. For example, the debt burden has obliterated the gains of democracy. Indeed, it is the case that some of the conditionalities imposed by the international financial institutions can only be seen through by autocratic regimes. Thus, with no assistance given to fledgling democracies, the grounds for conflict become more profound.

For now, however, it would appear that the best way to meet the impending challenges is to have a clear understanding of the complexities of conflict in the continent. The strategy of “one size fits all” which is sometimes employed in explaining conflicts in the continent is as unhelpful as it can be dangerous. More importantly, however, it has the danger of misinforming policy makers about the peculiarities of a continent that is often at the receiving end of global vicissitudes.

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