

Lead Article: Development, Culture and Conflict

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ABSTRACT Jan Pronk highlights the growing conflict potential as economic and technological forces behind globalization lead to more and more greed, an intemperate pursue of material welfare and growth, destruction in the name of renewal and progress, and a tremendous burden on the scarce physical resources of the earth.

KEYWORDS globalization; modernization; progress; resources; Cold War; unequal distribution

Introduction

From 1945 to 1989 international relations were characterized by two major conflicts.¹ East and West drifted into a political and ideological conflict, a Cold War between super-powers threatening each other with nuclear arms. The aspirations of people in the South to liberate themselves from the political, economic and cultural oppression by the North led to a second conflict: a world groundswell towards decolonization that could have developed into a chain of long-lasting violent confrontations. However, neither of the two conflicts developed into a global battlefield.

Parties at all sides, fearing that a Third World War would result in mutual nuclear annihilation, exercised restraint. The United Nations system and its Security Council provided for an institutional mechanism to address issues that serve as a reason to launch a war. Institutions did play an important role in the second half of the last century. Next to the UN many new institutions came into being. The establishment of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, fostering political and military cooperation among the members of the respective alliances, resulted in a balance of power between East and West. The Bretton Woods system and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade helped to mitigate international economic instability, so that a return of the economic crisis of the 1930s could be avoided. The creation of the European Community with a Common Market of the economies of both the victorious and the defeated countries in western Europe was a peace project on the basis of economic cooperation, meant to once and for all prevent a new world war starting in Europe.

Footloose globalization

Globalization is of all times. Throughout history, people have sought to broaden the scope of their activities. Other countries, continents and peoples were, allegedly, discovered.

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Trade and investment relations were entered into with peoples far away, not only by chance or exception. Empires were built, colonies were conquered, subjugating hitherto free and independent peoples, both nearby and at the other side of the globe. Technological change made this possible: ships, planes and weapons. It resulted in destruction of civilizations, colonialism, slavery and world wars. It was globalization based upon the law of the jungle. Those who were the strongest, both economically and militarily, could call the tune.

The creation of the new international order after 1945 had reshaped globalization. In doing so, globalization had been given a new push and a stronger pace, not only economically and technologically, but also politically and culturally. Orderly globalization, based on norms and values, replaced the disorder that had prevailed before. The hope that this would stay was based upon reason: enlightened self-interest had replaced short-sighted greed; forceful laws and institutions would contain the craving for power. Economic divergences, political disputes and cultural controversies could be addressed in such a way that conflicts would not escalate beyond control, but would be solved in a long-run win-win perspective for all concerned. This optimism turned out to be ill founded. Once globalization reached the frontiers of the globe itself, it became footloose.

The perfection of globalization took place when it received a new impetus at the end of the Cold War. Economic incentives, technological breakthroughs, in particular in information and communication technology, made national frontiers less and less relevant. Nation states continued to exist next to each other, but markets became global. This did, in particular, apply to frontiers regarding space and time. The costs of transport and communication decreased tremendously. Information became fast, complete and real time. It resulted in mass travel, mass communication, mass trade, mass consumption, and above all, mass movements of capital and finance beyond borders. Nowadays people are buying goods from all over the globe, moving around more frequently and farther than before. They migrate more easily to other places, where they feel the opportunities

to live a better life are greater than in the places where they were born.

One world

In economic terms there are no borders any more, only the limits of the globe itself. The latter were themselves fading away due to technological progress: globalization has gone hand in hand with endeavours to conquer space. Human activities are no longer being hampered by time differences. Today anything happening anywhere in the world is known at the very moment of the event to anybody else anywhere, and can get a direct response from there. Such a response would come in particular from those who have access to both information and capital: global corporations, shareholders, banks and financial institutions, ever more sophisticated. No place in the world can isolate itself from the consequences of economic, political or cultural developments events far away. At the turn of the millennia, for the first time in the history of world civilization, the world has become one world.

It had always been one world in terms of its natural environment and resources. Now it was united in economic and technological terms as well. Globalization had become a predominantly economic and technological phenomenon, dwarfing the post-war political efforts to unify the world on the basis of common values and institutions. Until 1989, globalization had been a man-made process. But somewhere in the 1990s globalization got a momentum of its own. Presently globalization is no longer a consequence of demonstrable political decisions. It is self-contained and self-supporting. Basically globalization amounts to the creation of a global market, linking production, investment, transportation, trade, advertisement and consumption anywhere in the world to any other place. The global market is a permanent 24/7 real time economy. The result is not only a disregard for national frontiers, but also (and equally important) the build up of footloose financial and economic power in global corporations and financial institutions beyond the control of national democracies.

So, economically and technologically the world had become one world. Was it also a cultural

oneness? Yes, to a certain extent. Globalization became a fact of life in people's minds. Not only on the market, but also in people's minds frontiers have withered away. For individual people too, time differences and long distances are not anymore barriers for communication. Technology has solved this. What used to be far away has come close. A distance in geography or time is no longer relevant. Only the distance within the human mind counts. There is a world of difference between those who enjoyed their early childhood and their basic education since the 1990s, and people belonging to earlier generations. While the latter may still seem to be taken aback by ever new breakthroughs of technology, for students and other young people, provided they have access to modernity, it is today only normal that nothing is far away anymore, that information is real time, throughout the clock and that everything is bound to become obsolete as soon as possible, for the sake of renewal and progress. Globalization has boosted a cultural revolution. It is a real time world, with real time connections and we feel part of it.

However, this does not apply to everybody. Indeed, in people's minds what used to be far away has come close. However, at the same time what lies at walking distance is often not being noticed or is even shut out of people's consciousness. Through Internet, e-mail, TV channels, cell-phones, credit cards and air tickets people feel directly connected with others, provided they have the same access to modernity, wherever they are, be it at the other side of the globe. That feeling is mutual. Middle class people in China, Nigeria and Brazil have the same experience as those in Europe and the United States. However, the same people, everywhere, feel much less connected with the deprived around the corner: landless farmers, homeless city dwellers, illegal immigrants, jobless poor, lonely elders and AIDS-victims beyond care. Globalization has also led to exclusion.

The conflict potential

I would like to highlight one particular consequence of this logic: the growing conflict potential.

The same technological and economic factors that have led to the cultural revolution in terms of the unheard availability of information and the unprecedented communication potential, have eroded the common norms, values, objectives and expectations, which had together formed the post-World War II international cultural consensus. The economic and technological forces behind globalization led to more and more greed, an intemperate pursue of material welfare and growth, destruction in the name of renewal and progress, and a tremendous burden on the scarce physical resources of the earth, so much that the consensus broke down. When globalization became footloose, it burst out of its own framework and began to devour the very principles and values that had been embraced in order to avoid uncontrollable conflicts and violence. Globalization in its present form threatens the ecology of the earth, endangers biodiversity, pollutes the atmosphere of the planet and risks our common climate. Thereby globalization is reducing the potential of yet unborn people to have the same opportunities to lead a good life as the present generation. However, not only intergenerational inequality is widening. Also among the people belonging to the present generation, globalization is producing larger inequalities than ever before. Since 1990 all indices of social and economic inequality show an alarming trend towards polarization.

The conflict potential is rampant, within countries as well as worldwide. History has taught us: no society can afford too much inequality. At a certain moment, people will no longer accept that any perspective to keep up with others is fading away. When people who belong to an underclass feel that they have to compete with middle class and upper class people in order to emancipate, and when they become aware that the better-off people discard the notions of coexistence, common interest and cooperation, society runs the risk to be torn apart. Beyond a certain point people will not accept anymore that others kick the ladder away from under their feet. Then people will turn against the system, because they have come to the conclusion that the cultural consensus of which they too were supposed to

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benefit, no longer applies. Then they will turn competition into a fight.

This historical lesson in principle would apply to all societies, both countries and the world as a whole. Turning against the prevailing world order can take many forms. It can vary from food riots to migration or so-called illegal entry to other countries. It can vary also from strikes and opposition against national authorities, who serve the interests of middle classes or specific interests groups only – be it regional, urban, tribal, language, religious, ethnic, racial or otherwise – to full fledged civil war. It can result in efforts to build alternative political and economic systems, based on different values. It can also lead to hate against the powers in the world that are considered to be responsible for inequality, exclusion and injustice. So, it can give rise to anti-western sentiments – because many in Asia, Africa and the Middle East see the West as the culprit – and even to international terrorism.

Resurgence of conflicts

The end of the Cold War has marked the beginning of a new series of hot conflicts. Wars between nations had become exceptional, but within quite a few nations violent conflicts broke out. When the euphoria during the first three years following the *détente* between East and West had evaporated, nightmarish scenarios developed in countries such as the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, Somalia, Rwanda, Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan, Afghanistan and in many others. Some of those conflicts were not new at all. They did not emerge, but re-emerge, often after decades of silence. The power struggle between East and West had paralyzed conditions in the South and prevented any political change within a country whatsoever. Both super powers had feared that such changes might endanger the demarcation lines between each other's spheres of influence. This was no longer the case. Parties to a conflict within a country were no longer afraid that a fight would provoke intervention from abroad. Old conflicts re-emerged, weapons were wetted and violence struck many countries from within.

Economic

There were many reasons to fight: economic, political as well as cultural. Economic conflicts circled round access to resources – fertile land and water – and the allocation of benefits resulting from the exploitation of mineral resources such as oil. Other conflicts reflected an unequal distribution of employment, income, welfare, taxation or access to public services. In most cases poverty itself did not result in violence. The focus of the very poor on survival and on the daily struggle for food and other essentials demands all the energy they can afford. In development, stagnation is seldom a reason to wage war. If people feel that life tomorrow is bound to be the same as today and yesterday, there is not much reason to fight others, who are in the same situation. However, when they learn that the perspective for tomorrow is less than the reality up to now, for instance because they are being deprived of scarce resources necessary for survival, they may conclude that the only way out is to fight. This is one reason why, for instance in Darfur and other Sahelian areas, nomadic cattle owners and settled farmers have waged war against each other. Both need water and fertile land, for grazing and for the cultivating of crops, respectively. Those resources are increasingly becoming scarce, because of climate change and also because of overpopulation, not only with people but also with cattle.

In other countries it is neither stagnation nor deterioration, but the very beginning of economic progress that may lead to violence. If the benefits of economic growth are being monopolized by some, or reaped unequally, the perspectives of different groups of people will diverge. Groups that consider this as unjust will protest. Some may resort to force.

In general, economic development, resulting in a transformation of the structure of the economy, in different employment opportunities and in the rise of new classes of entrepreneurs and owners of assets is turning age-old patterns of vested interests upside down. Change seems to produce more violence than stagnation, inequality more than poverty. It is always a matter of scarcity, distribution and power.

Modernization will always result in diverging perspectives. In new independent nation states, which allow their citizens to travel around freely and to live and work anywhere within the country, modernization has led to large domestic migration. Increasingly people have taken the initiative of finding a job in other regions of the country, different from the homelands, habitats and livelihoods of the group to which they belong. Throughout national markets, commercial relations have widened and intensified. It was unavoidable that such modernization and economic development would lead to new majority and minority relations.

Political

Political factors behind the outburst of conflicts were often related to the economic ones. After decolonization the newly independent states had to become real nation states, with frontiers, governments, constitutions and laws, and with structures and processes of political decision-making. Representative, legislative, administrative, executive and judicial powers had to be established. Within a new state, groups who had lived apart or in conflict with each other had to be brought together in the same nation. People had to be presented with a perspective of economic progress, which required investments, taxation and public expenditure, and the strengthening and regulation of markets. The world outside, consisting of countries that themselves had taken centuries to accomplish all this, expected that the new states would do so in a couple of decades only. Of course, the new states would not have to follow the same long path trodden by their colonizers. They could choose to avoid mistakes made by others. They could receive assistance from abroad. They could also benefit from modernization and cut short the period of transformation from a poor and dependent country into a self-reliant developing nation state. However, it still would take time, and all requirements to become a harmonious nation state were equally potential sources of conflict. So, it was only natural that so many political conflicts emerged, not only shortly after a country had become independent,

but also a few decades later, when groups within the country came to the conclusion that their own rulers were favouring some groups above others, or were corrupt or oppressive. Some of those conflicts focused on questions of good governance, others on democracy and human rights. All of them dealt with power: how to get access to power and how to share and distribute the power?

Groups entering into a struggle about political and economic questions – the distribution of power and welfare – distinguished themselves from each other in purely political or economic terms: landowners, farmers, cattle growers, industrial entrepreneurs, labourers, middle class people, teachers, students, political activists and others. Sometimes economic and political conflicts concerned the position of endogenous peoples *versus* the descendants of the former colonizers. Elsewhere such conflicts emerged between people who had already for a long time lived in a specific region, and immigrants, be it new immigrants or descendants of people who had migrated there earlier.

An urban-rural divide compounded economic and political conflicts. The economic interests of people living in cities are not the same as those in the rural areas. Demographic patterns have added to the complexity of the conflicts. Developing countries have often not been able to meet the expectations of a multitude of young people. Inadequate schooling, huge unemployment, scattered family relations and the breakdown of village structures and traditional authority, due to fast modernization, have boosted addiction to alcohol and drugs, prostitution and crime, and have resulted in much violence. In particular when there are many young boys, uprooted and lacking an economic perspective, the situation may become explosive.

Cultural

In quite a few countries economic, political and criminal violence have fed each other. Often there is only a fine dividing line between them. The underlying conflicts have frequently been given a cultural connotation as well. Racial, ethnic, tribal

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and religious differences between people play a role. Within countries people come from different backgrounds, speak different languages, and follow different traditions and allegiances. All this does result in a variety of identities. When such identities coincide with economic or political groupings, conflicts may seem to be cultural – that is: tribal, ethnic, religious or otherwise – also when they are basically economic or political. In some situations an urban-rural divide runs parallel with tribal differences. Crafts and trades may traditionally have been dominated by specific castes or by people from a specific ethnic group. Majority–minority relations can have developed along tribal or religious lines. However, in most cases ethnic, religious or tribal conflicts do not stand alone. Often conflicts between identity groups can be traced back to economic reasons: economic exploitation or exclusion, inequality of access, social injustice. The violent outbreak of conflicts between people at the grassroots, belonging to different self-proclaimed identity groups, is often the result of political manipulation. Sometimes political leaders, opinion leaders or economic interests groups try to gain more power by applying divide and rule tactics. Or they try to accumulate wealth by distorting markets, expropriating properties and selling arms, or even handing them out. Political mobilization of people along ethnic lines is then an easy route. The genocide in Rwanda and the civil war in Bosnia in the 1990s, the recent clashes in Kenya, the civil war in Afghanistan and the clashes between Hindus and Muslims in India, and Christians and Muslims in the Moluccan Islands in Indonesia, are all examples of such politically induced violence.

So, while many violent conflicts seem to be fought between cultural identity groups, it would not be legitimate to label them as basically ethnic, tribal, religious or otherwise. The appearance may be cultural, the cause is often economic and the reason political.

Complex

450 Not all conflicts can be easily explained by referring to economic factors alone. Sometimes the

violence results in so much economic damage for all groups concerned that economic rationality seems to be completely absent. In such cases other reasons to wage war were more important than scarcity or a widening gap between economic interest groups. Neither can all conflicts be traced back to a failing state, bad governance or political manipulation. Strong states with well-established structures are vulnerable as well; witness for instance the former Yugoslavia and India. There are also cases in which political leaders stand helpless against a popular urge for revenge and retaliation, though more often they tend to surf on it.

On the other side, some conflicts are predominantly cultural. In some situations hate originating in past events – sometimes far back in history – is being cultivated. In some countries controversies within religions can very easily be inflamed, without specific economic or political reasons, often more easily than inter-religious disputes. In other situations, traditional customs call for a violent attitude towards people from a different tribe. Nowadays it seems to be politically correct to deny that tribes exist in Africa, and to argue that they are no more than a foreign construct. However, this is much too simple reasoning. All identity groups are to a great extent social constructs, tribes as well, but their construction, delimitation and definition, including their self-identification, always originate in factors inherent to their traditional social and economic environment.

So, economic, political, cultural and resources-related dimensions of conflicts are intertwined. They affect each other and feed each other. When people become conscious that they have been deprived of nearly everything, when they do not have any hope or perspective that some day life may get better, they feel that they are losing their identity as a national citizen, as an economic person, as a human being with some control of natural resources necessary to survive. When people sense that they have lost all those elements of their identity, they have no other option than to cling to an ultimate bulwark: a religious, tribal or ethnic identity, a bare cultural identity perhaps, but an identity that gives them some strength,

because they can share this with others who are in the same condition. When people are deprived of any protection by either the state or the market, group loyalties are the lender of last resort. Despair breeds violence. Resentment does the same. When people, even when they live in reasonable economic conditions, are being told by leaders that in order to prevent being economically sidelined and politically oppressed there is no other way than ethnic or religious mobilization, violence is lurking in the corner.

However, whether a violent outbreak will occur also depends on the reaction by the other parties in the conflict. Will they timely grasp the potential danger arising from the widening gap in society and try to bridge that gap, or will they rely on their own strength, protect themselves against a possible attack, resort to force and oppression and perhaps launch a pre-emptive strike?

Development is conflict

The origins, characteristics and complexity of conflicts in the post-World War II, post-Cold War and post-colonial world have not been widely understood. In the period that Boutros Boutros Ghali served as the Secretary General of the United Nations, this organization acknowledged the mutual relation between peace and development. However, concrete activities of the organization were limited to the deployment of a peace force in order to bring stability and contain the violence, together with the provision of humanitarian relief assistance to conflict victims. Political activities aiming at sustainable peace were in most cases haphazard and piecemeal and sometimes misguided. In some cases, political mediation from outside reflected the interests of foreign powers. Outside intervention in conflicts has sometimes been counterproductive, because it turned out to favour one particular party to the conflict more than others. Foreign efforts to bring stability and peace sometimes sowed the seeds of future violence, for instance if local groups could rise to power thanks to foreign armed support. Sometimes sheer lack of insight in the history of a conflict, and its economic, political and cultural environment was responsible for failures to

bring sustainable peace; sometimes it was foreign arrogance and disdain, or the subjugation of the interests of the people affected by a conflict to those of the intervening powers.

In addition to political, military and humanitarian efforts to deal with violent conflicts, investment in reconstruction and development is necessary in order to address root causes of conflicts. For a long time in international development cooperation, conflicts were seen as an exception, as a form of temporary instability. The idea was that rendering foreign development assistance should wait until a country would have got its act together and could ensure good governance, stability and security. However, this is a wrong perception of the relation between development and conflict.

Development implies change, which is change in a *status quo* that had resulted in stagnation or even involution and decay. Of course, development requires more than change. Only change that can be considered as some form of progress could qualify as development, provided that the definition and weighing of such progress would be the proper right of the people within the country itself, not the prerogative of outsiders, and in particular not those outsiders who are giving the assistance. This conceptualization of a process of development implies that ever more people should benefit. A situation in which only some people would be able to reap the benefits of progress, while the living conditions of others would deteriorate does not deserve to be earmarked as development. Development is a process of perpetual progress, benefiting ever more people, on their own terms and according to their own values.

Such a process is by definition conflict ridden. In any society there are interests at stake. Some groups in society have an interest in preserving the *status quo*, others in change. Some have more power than others. A process of change requires that those who have a vested interest in the *status quo* step backwards to the benefit of others who did not have enough access to resources, welfare or the channels of political decision-making. Those who are in power often claim that time is not yet ripe for a more equal distribution of resources and income. They may use economic

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reasoning: concentrating resources in the hands of some, who will invest these resources in such a way that economic growth can be maximized, will result in higher production and income than if these resources would be spread out prematurely and risk being consumed rather than invested. In this view, postponing a more equal distribution of welfare would result in greater welfare for all, be it at a somewhat later time. However, such a line of reasoning is limitless. The same people who argue for postponing equity today will do so tomorrow. There is an inherent conflict between various groups of people within a society that is embarking on a road towards development.

A decade or so after the rise of so many conflicts in developing countries they could no longer be neglected or put aside until stability and peace would be restored. Thereupon in international development cooperation, the relation between development and conflict was given more attention. However, it is not a matter of development *and* conflict. The phenomenon of conflict should be seen as inherent to processes of development themselves. In other words: development *is* conflict.

So, conflicts are the rule, not the exception. Development manifests itself by uncovering existing conflicts and feeding new ones. This appreciation of processes of development can lead to one conclusion only: conflict prevention is not possible. What can be prevented is the escalation of conflicts, not conflicts themselves. They exist. They can be addressed, managed, suppressed, contained and solved, but they cannot retroactively be wiped out. The underlying factors are part of an economic, environmental and political reality. They have shaped cultural configurations. They stay on as a reality in people's minds, a historic reality that is still remembered and being handed over to others in the form of stories, values, traditions, expectations, feelings and emotions. This is one reason why conflicts can re-emerge, even if it would seem that they had been solved, and even many years later. This is another reason why the cultural dimensions of conflicts are so important: different interpretations of the social and economic conditions that caused a conflict, different perceptions of

problems and dominance of one perception over others. Cultural conflicts do exist, but most conflicts are complex.

Addressing conflicts

The complexity of conflicts during processes of development requires an integrated approach to all dimensions of a conflict. Each dimension has its characteristics. Economic conflicts concerning issues of welfare, political conflicts related to questions of power and cultural conflicts focusing on identity, have their own rules. Economic and social conflicts can be managed within a reasonable period of time, by a good combination of economic growth and (re)distribution of assets and income, creating a perspective of progress for everybody, including present generations. However, cultural, tribal, ethnic, religious or sub-national conflicts last long. They are rooted deeply in society. Cultural conflicts, whether or not accompanied or sharpened by economic inequalities, outlive generations. Political conflicts may be rooted less deeply in society, but when they result in a political mobilization of the people along ethnic or religious lines, they can become extremely violent and repetitive.

Political and cultural conflicts are less manageable than economic conflicts, because there is no quick and easy way out by means of redistribution. In an economic conflict there is always a win-win solution feasible: the right path of investment, growth and distribution can make all parties gain. Cultural identity conflicts are different. Identities are defined in terms of absolute positions, not in terms of shares of total potential welfare. A stronger position of one group in a society – be it a tribe, an ethnic group, a religious denomination, a social class, a sex, a tongue, a colour, a caste, an elite, a nationalistic clan or any group defining its identity in other than purely economic terms – always means that another group will lose.

Welfare is a relative concept. It can be increased, also through intelligent distribution. Power is an absolute concept, a zero sum game. Total power cannot be increased by means of redistributing it. It can only be transformed, when parties come to

the conclusion that, rather than relying on their own power, sharing power with the adversary can increase the joint strength. The same applies to cultural conflicts. A solution is possible, provided that each group considers its identity not threatened in contact with another group, but enriched. Cultural confrontation has to be transformed into cultural communication and exchange. Political polarization has to be transformed in cooperation. Sharing will result in a richer identity and in greater strength. But as long as this is not the case, as long as economic scarcities and political manipulation prevail, fear will have the upper hand. For all these reasons cultural conflicts are longer lasting, less manageable and more violent than basically economic conflicts.

When a conflict has been stalemated, agents from outside can take parties by the hand. Addressing conflicts with the help of outside assistance, mediation or even intervention can do more than providing a certain degree of security by sending a peace force and massive relief aid to victims of a conflict. Both are necessary, but not sufficient. Too often these two approaches have functioned as a substitute for action to address the root causes of a conflict. Assistance from outside, during negotiations to work out a ceasefire and, thereupon, to make peace, can help transforming a political power dispute into firm and stable national institutions, on the basis of constitutional law reflecting the strength of common principles and procedures. Such assistance can also turn confrontation between ethnic, religious or tribal communities into meaningful communication: less and less fear and resentment, more and more respect and understanding.

Agents from outside are bound to come with their own perceptions of a conflict. These can add valuable insights and enlighten parties that were caught in a stalemate. However, sustainable solutions to a conflict can only come from within. Help from outside can be no more than a catalyst, releasing, supporting and binding positive forces in a conflict-ridden society, tying negative ones, until development can take a more harmonious course.

If outside agents show ambitions that go further than acting as a catalyst, they may, rather than

offering help, complicate a process of development and peace building. Agents from outside often tend to disregard dimensions that are considered essential by the parties themselves. Often they are not very knowledgeable, even superficial or tilted. Their perceptions tend to reflect their own interests. In those cases, international development assistance, political mediation and the deployment of an international peace force may even become counterproductive. They may become part of the problem rather than of the solution.

The West and the rest

Since the beginning of the 1990s, in many developing countries, conflicts have arisen along the lines sketched above. International efforts have been made to address them, but of not much avail. The new international order, which had been established after 1945, proved to be too weak to address the new challenges raised by globalization and intra-state conflicts. The international cultural consensus had been eroded and did no longer provide an effective basis for the containment of both supranational economic forces and intra-state political and cultural conflicts. New principles and values were agreed upon and incorporated into international treaties and resolutions. Among these the concepts of *human security* and *responsibility to protect* stood out. However, in practice, states were paying lip service and the gap between theory and practice widened. It was not only due to a lack of political will. There was a lack of capacity as well. Interstate violence could be addressed with international law, including war law and the Geneva conventions, international arbitration, Security Council Resolutions and rulings by the International Court of Justice. Civil wars were different. Parties that were not a member of international institutions could sometimes be persuaded to respect their rulings, if they thought that this would be in their own interest. International humanitarian intervention could be considered. However, this was quite difficult in case of conflicts between state actors and non-state actors. The principle of national sovereignty, one of the pillars of the new international order after 1945,

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stood in the way of effective action by the international community to ensure individual political and civil human rights and the rights of minorities, and to realize the responsibility to protect people against oppression and violence, in particular violence by states and non-state actors in combat. So far, the new International Criminal Court has not been able to halt an alarming rise of impunity. Its establishment has turned out to be no more than a disguise of incapability and inaction.

The international community has gradually lost its credibility. Organizations belonging to the family of the United Nations and powerful countries that call the tune within the UN system have been criticized for measuring with two rods. In particular, after the invasion of Iraq by the US, sidelining the UN, fabricating truths and spreading violence, the respect for international values, law and institutions have gone down tremendously. Fifty years earlier, the US, which had become by far the most powerful state in the world, had been willing to share its powers with others in order to secure common global values. That decision had proven crucial in order to maintain the international cultural consensus implied in the new order. When the same country stepped aside and claimed the right to define its own homeland security, to guard this with means that were in flagrant contradiction with what had been agreed before, and even to execute pre-emptive strikes, the consensus broke down. Since the beginning of this new century it is no longer self-evident that all nations and people share the same norms, values, objectives and perspectives that constitute a common culture. Western countries are advocating a paradigm change: security first, the pursuit of other values is an objective of secondary importance.

The philosophical logic of such a paradigm change is debatable. After 9/11 it is understandable that people in the West fear that international terrorists will strike again. However, making other values, such as human rights and sustainable development, inferior to security considerations may in the long-run lead to less security, instead of more. Moreover, people in Africa, Asia and the Middle East blame the West for applying

security? What about the Palestinians? Why always blaming Islam? Why always pointing at Arabs? What is behind sermons regarding democracy as long as western countries cling to most favoured positions in powerful world institutions? Why preaching trade liberalization by African countries, while the protection of European agriculture continues? Why do western countries demand good governance in developing countries and simultaneously support authoritarian and bad regimes in the name of international security? How should we judge the subordination of human rights to geopolitical interests?

Both are lacking and this is a reason for concern. We may foresee more and more intra-state conflicts emerging and escalating. These will result from three structural phenomena: (1) the dualistic character of the development process within these countries; (2) increasing physical scarcities; and (3) the exclusion of many people from global markets. These conflicts will increasingly affect other communities, nearby and far off. The same forces that have brought globalization to these countries will spread domestic conflicts across their national frontiers. Globalization is a two-way street.

What should be done?

First: Take conflicts seriously, not as whims or exceptions, but as the very nature of development itself. Deal with conflicts in an integrated fashion. Tackle the root causes, not only the consequences: the violence, destruction and human suffering. Tackle all of them: the economic causes, the environmental conditions, the political reasons as well as the cultural factors.

Second: Be modest. Conflicts cannot be solved from outside. Their escalation can be contained with external assistance, but the conflicts themselves should be addressed from within. Ambitions beyond functioning as a catalyst may turn western assistance into a part of the problem, rather than the solution.

Third: Be consistent. Do not preach values that are not adhered to by western countries themselves.

Dismantle international inequities that still affect younger nations and poorer countries. Do not use double standards.

Finally: Build bridges and de-escalate. In the present circumstances polarization and confrontation will result in a still greater divide and in clashes beyond control.

The global cultural consensus was built about 60 years ago, three political generations back. These generations have tried to make the best of it. There were successes and failures. Presently that consensus is slipping away. Distrust and resentment are mounting, within countries as well as globally. However, in recent years I have had the privilege of meeting many young people in quite a few countries, students and young professionals as well as others. Their economic conditions are different.

Some are very well off, others poor and unemployed. Their political freedoms are different as well. Some enjoy full freedom of speech; some had become rebels, while others still have to be afraid as refugees and asylum-seekers. Their cultural background was different as well, and so were their traditions and religious beliefs. However, all of them were looking across borders, willing to commit themselves to a common cause, and looking forward rather than backward. Increasingly young people are seeking similarities rather than differences between cultures. My experience is limited, of course. However, I have the impression that nowadays young people are more open towards each other, irrespective of their background and circumstances. I have also the impression that young people are less motivated by greed and career than the previous generation and that they are more positive towards values of solidarity and responsibility.

Note

- 1 This text is a shortened version of the *Geert Hofstede Lecture* delivered by Jan Pronk at the Groningen University 21 May 2008.