

International arms trade treaty needed to contain world's merchants of death

DESMOND TUTU

FOR many years, I've been involved in the peace business, doing what I can to help people overcome their differences. In doing so, I've also learnt a lot about the business of war: the arms trade.

In my opinion, it is the modern slave trade. It is an industry out of control: every day more than 1 000 people are killed by conventional weapons. The vast majority are innocent men, women and children.

There have been international treaties to control the spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons for decades. Yet there is still no treaty governing sales of all conventional weapons, from handguns to attack helicopters.

As a result, weapons fall into the wrong hands all too easily, fuelling human rights abuses, prolonging wars and entrenching poverty.

This continues because of the complicity of governments, especially rich countries' governments, which turn a blind eye to the appalling suffering associated with the proliferation of weapons.

It is estimated that every year small arms alone kill more people than the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki together. Many more people are injured, terrorised or driven from their homes by armed violence.

You only need to pick up a newspaper to see the scale of the problem. From the conflict in the Middle East, to the killings in Darfur, to gun violence in Brazil, the lack of global controls on the arms trade is causing the suffering of innocent people.

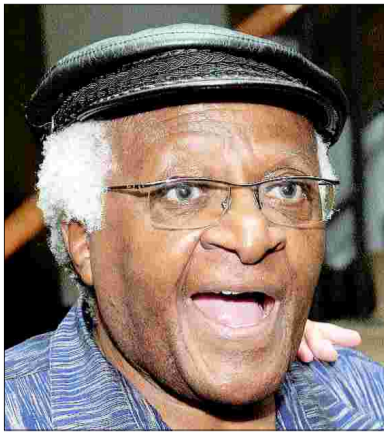
Take the DRC, where armed violence recently flared up again, and millions have died during almost a decade of conflict. Despite a UN arms embargo against armed

groups there, weapons have continued to flood in.

Arms found during weapons collections include those made in Germany, France, Israel, US and Russia. The only common denominator is that nearly all these weapons were manufactured outside Africa.

In 2005, Russia, the US, France, Germany and the UK accounted for an estimated 82% of the global arms market. And it's big business: the amount rich countries spend annually fighting HIV/Aids represents 18 days' global spending on arms.

But while the profits flow back to the developed world, the effects of the arms trade are predominantly felt in developing countries. More than two-thirds of the value of all arms are sold to Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. It is no coincidence that many of the world's poorest countries have recently experienced armed conflict.



CALL TO ARMS: Archbishop Tutu

In addition to the deaths, injuries and rapes, the cost of conflict goes deeper still.

For example, in northern Uganda, which has been devastated by 20 years of armed conflict, it has

been estimated that 250 000 children do not attend school. That war, which may now be coming finally to an end, has been fuelled by supplies of foreign-made weapons. And, as with so many wars, the heaviest toll has been on the region's children.

Children under five are always the most vulnerable to disease, and in a war zone adequate medical care is often not available and people flee to makeshift camps. Last year, it was estimated that 41% of deaths in the camps for refugees in northern Uganda were children under five.

The world could eradicate poverty in only a few generations if a fraction of the spending on the war business were spent on peace. An average of \$22 billion is spent on arms by countries in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa every year, according to estimates for the US Congress. This sum would have enabled those countries

to put every child in school and to reduce child mortality by two-thirds by 2015, fulfilling two of the Millennium Development Goals.

This year, the world has the chance to finally say no to the scandal of the unregulated weapons trade. In October, the UN General Assembly will vote on a proposal to start working towards an Arms Trade Treaty based on a simple principle: no weapons for violations of international law. In other words, a ban on selling weapons if there is a clear risk they will be used to abuse human rights or fuel conflict.

The UN resolution has been put forward by the governments of Australia, Argentina, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Kenya and the UK. These governments believe that "the idea of an arms trade treaty is one whose time has come".

I agree. We must end impunity for governments who authorise the

supply of weapons when they know there's a great danger that those weapons will be used for gross human rights abuses.

Today, great strides are being made towards ending impunity for war criminals; it cannot be acceptable that their arms suppliers continue to escape punishment.

Fifty-five governments, including much of Africa, Latin America and Europe, support an arms trade treaty. It also has widespread popular support: more than a million people in more than 150 countries have signed the Million Faces Petition supporting the call for such a treaty.

No longer should the peace business be undermined by the arms business. I call on all governments to put the control of the international arms trade at the top of their agenda.

Tutu is Emeritus Archbishop of Cape Town.

EITHER STATE OPTIONS BETTER THAN A STATE OF WAR

Israel's fluttering peace options

RONNIE KASRILS

THE already grave Israeli-Palestinian conflict has worsened immeasurably. Any hope for a resumption of the stalled negotiations, and therefore a chance for peace, appears to have been dashed by Israel's overwhelming and disproportionate military onslaught against both Gaza and Lebanon.

As a consequence most observers have been writing the obituaries of the two-state option. Is there a way forward?

This was discussed by Middle East specialists at a recent conference in Pretoria, jointly hosted by the Friederich Ebert Foundation and the Institute for Global Dialogue.

Dr As'ad Ghanem, a Palestinian academic from Haifa, argued for the bi-national model. Dr Virginia Tilley, well known in South Africa, argued for the single-state solution which she said already exists, given the hopeless dismemberment of the West Bank.

The difference between the single-state option and the bi-national option is that a bi-national state enshrines rights and protection for the Jewish and Palestinian people as two distinct national groups. The one-state option provides all groups with equal rights in a common democracy.

Even without the Lebanon turning point, who could accept that the dismembered West Bank could pass as a viable state?

The same logic that infuses the Zionist mindset informed the apartheid doctrine, which sought to avert the demographic threat posed by the black majority by consigning them tobantustan citizenship.

After consistently rejecting the two-state option between 1948 and 1990, Israel began accepting the prospect – if it could control the process. This gave rise to the Oslo Accords, the difficult negotiations around West Bank contiguity and sovereignty, and the rejection and unilateral disengagement by Ariel Sharon's government.

The Sharonist approach is a debate over Israel simply managing the status quo – or "transferring" Palestinians into Jordan – or absorbing all land and people into a Greater Israel.

However, there is a growing fear in Israel that a one-state alternative might come to pass if nothing is done. Given the demographics, this would see Jews in a minority.

Ehud Olmert put it succinctly: "More and more Palestinians are uninterested in a negotiated two-



BITTER HARVEST: Palestinian farmers tend to their crops in the shadow of a wall built by Israel to stop Palestinian militants coming from the West Bank.

state solution because they want to change the essence of the conflict from an Algerian paradigm to a South African one. From a struggle against 'occupation' in their parlance, to a struggle for 'one man one vote'.

"That is, of course, a much cleaner struggle, a much more popular struggle and, ultimately, a much more powerful one. For us, it would mean the end of the Jewish state."

Such a scenario would surely see the growth of a civil rights struggle of all those inhabiting Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. Such a struggle for equal rights in a democratic unitary or bi-national state would conceivably see the breaking of the stalemate.

Advocates of the single or bi-national state need to focus on how such a state would be structured, how it would govern, how it would meet its citizens' needs, guarantee their rights and allay their fears.

They should also examine the ideas of the previous advocates of the bi-national state – the commu-

nist parties and the anti-Zionist school of Martin Buber, Erich Fromm, Israel Shahak and Albert Einstein.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has stated that every new Arab generation hates Israel more than the previous one – a consequence of the brutal manifestations of a colonial settler project.

A veteran Israeli peace activist, Uri Avnery, agrees with the Syrian president and says to fellow Israelis: "Is this the legacy we wish to leave for 50, for 500 years?"

Is the one-state thesis a mere academic exercise? History shows that ideas that break the mould start small – with a few advocates. If conditions allow and if the situation ripens, theory can seize the minds of many and inspire action.

In South Africa, this came about through the protracted mass struggle of our people reinforced by arms and a powerful international solidarity movement.

Clearly, for the one-state thesis to succeed, a monumental mind-shift

affecting Israelis and Palestinians would be required.

Would the two-state option have a better chance? For all the obstacles, disappointments and setbacks, it appears to be the more implementable. It would also break the impasse.

But if it is not based on the 1967 Green Line and the 22% West Bank as contiguous territory, with genuine independence and sovereignty, it stands no chance.

If it is based on such sovereignty, it becomes a viable option for the Palestinians and the international community of nations, including the Arab states, to buy in to.

This has been suggested in the Palestinian Prisoners' Manifesto of June 2006, and the Beirut Declaration of Arab States in 2002, which agreed to the recognition of Israel if such terms were met.

If it is impossible to jump to a unitary state, then the two-state solution may be the only option.

It could form the basis, through mutual economic progress, to evolve

by steps into a common state.

Avnery has asked Israelis: "What is our historic objective in this confrontation? A fool will say 'to rely on America and world Jewry'. The greatest fools will add that 'there is no solution. This situation will last forever. There is nothing to be done but defend ourselves in war, after war after war'."

He says: "The wise want to live here in 500 years. Our most basic national interests demand that we extend our hands to the Arab nations and act together with them for the rehabilitation of the region."

The one- or two-state option could well provide the historic breakthrough. One does not have to uphold Zionism or the state of Israel in its present form to support the existence of the Jewish people, their religion and culture.

Democracy, rather than exclusivism, is the best antidote to antisemitism, racism and xenophobia.

Kasrils is Minister for Intelligence, and writes in his personal capacity.

Biko's message of cultural liberation remains relevant

SIBONGILE SOMDAKA

TODAY marks the 29th anniversary of the death of one of the Azania's remarkable liberation icons, Steve Bantu Biko. The founder and martyr of the Black Consciousness Movement would have been 60 this year.

Born in King William's Town, he attended a Roman Catholic school in Natal, and then the University of Natal Medical School. Under his inspiration, black students broke away from the National Union of South African Students (Nusas) to form their separate South African Students Organisation (Saso) in 1967.

Dropping his medical studies, the charismatic Biko emerged as an outstanding organiser and theoretician, promoting black consciousness through his writing, speeches and actions. From 1973, he endured banning and other forms of state harassment. On September 12, 1977 he died after being assaulted while in police custody.

Justice Minister Jimmy Kruger suggested he had died while on a hunger strike, and said his death "left him cold". The inquest revealed he had suffered brain damage and other injuries, and had been kept naked and chained while being driven, critically injured, from Port Elizabeth to Tshwane.

The inquest magistrate failed to find any person responsible for his death. Biko's death provoked an angry reaction from young black intellectuals, on a scale surpassing the 1976 Soweto uprising and Sharpeville massacre of 1960.

In reaction to white racism and liberal paternalism, black intellectuals, led by Biko, decided in the late 1960s that blacks (defined as all who were discriminated against on grounds of race) must organise themselves to promote black assertion and self-esteem, as blacks in the United States were doing. Blacks were told to rid themselves of their slave mentality: "Black man, you are on your own" was the cry.

Twelve years into our liberation and 29 years after Biko's death, blacks in this country still have a low opinion of themselves, although we are indigenous and in the vast majority in this country of our forebears. The degree of control over our minds by white influences needs a drastic cultural transformation.

We are not proud of ourselves. Black people have yet to take Biko's message to heart. Our languages are

in trouble, not from someone else, but from ourselves. It's a reflection on the depth of our consciousness.

Biko and the other young leaders stressed that the liberation of black people was first a psychological struggle against the portrayal of blacks as inferior and lacking the good qualities that made whites superior.

They placed cultures at a centre stage. Biko taught that black people must be proud of their culture and personal looks. He rejected the use of whitening skin lotions and hair stretching because these were tantamount to attempting to become white, and were an acceptance of whites as superior to blacks.

Our country is still a direct extension of Europe. Cultural imperialism is taking over the lives of our youth. Crime, drugs, HIV/Aids, prostitution and materialism are the order of the day. Thugs and gangsters are young people who are holding our communities to ransom.

Foreign music, movies, clothing, behaviour and languages continue to dominate black youth. As young people, the most important starting point is to understand our history, to manage the present and shape the future. Our history is a priority. It will make it clear to young people that activities such as mining, textile work, writing, medical skills and mathematics are not inventions of "godlike whites".

Biko and the scholar Frantz Fanon, the Algerian revolutionary, were right when they said a complete physical freedom is impossible without psychological freedom.

One of Biko's greatest legacies was the explosion of pride among the victims of apartheid. The value that black consciousness placed on culture reverberated across our land, reaching into prisons and out to the communities in exile. Our people, who once looked to Europe and America for creative sustenance, turned their eyes to Africa.

In the light of the challenges the country is facing, Biko must be turning in his grave. There is no doubt though that, had he lived, he would have continued to make enormous contributions to the struggle of the masses.

In the words of Biko, the most potent weapon and the instrument in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.

Somdaka is chairman of the Azanian Youth Organisation in the Western Cape.

Put shipping at the top of the agenda and change the laws holding it back

EMPTY berths greeted ship-spotter's last weekend. Indeed, only a handful of containerships were in port; Paardeberg – formerly the navy's Outeniqua and now under new ownership – can hardly be paying her way as she reclines at the Repair Quay, and the small bulker San Giorgio lay at the Eastern Mole.

With no grain ships, the paucity of bunkers and the Boland orchards in blossom ahead of the fruit season that will draw reefer ships here later, the port has been quiet for several days.

Thus, with considerable pleasure, I watched Ocean Africa Container Line's Limpopo sail the other day. Indicative of the burgeoning Angolan trade, she was fully laden as she headed into a long swell from the west.

A joint operation between Safmarine and Unicorn, OACL has a fleet of feeder containerships that operate from Durban to Luanda via

PORT POURRI



BRIAN INGPEN

intermediate ports, while another service links Durban and East Africa. Yet all their vessels are chartered from foreign owners, and all oil products are moved along the coast in foreign-flagged tankers.

Services such as these came under the spotlight last Thursday at a seminar organised by the Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (Wista), a commendable initiative. I was persuaded to join a panel to argue the merits or otherwise of cabotage, in terms of which a littoral state reserves the coastwise carriage of cargo for locally-registered ships. The practice retains significant

revenue within the country, rather than having it repatriated to the accounts of foreign shipowners, brokers and others.

The background to the cabotage issue in South Africa is that those old coal-fired coasters suffered severe competition from foreign ships on both sides of World War 2. Once the Union-Castle mailships had completed discharging cargo in Cape Town, they had masses of space available to lift coastwise cargo in which, in view of the punctuality of their schedule, shippers readily booked cargo space. To fill their holds, other ships also undercut the coasters' tariffs.

Protests from the coasting companies fell on deaf ears, until it was pointed out that, while Union-Castle received significant state subsidies, the South African coasters were struggling. When the government leant on the likes of Union-Castle to leave the coastal trade to the locals,

the situation changed as Unicorn's South African-flagged vessels cornered the coastwise market.

Government pressure on British & Commonwealth – Union-Castle's parent company – had also resulted, first in the flagging of two cargo-ships in Cape Town in 1946, and later in the formation of Springbok Line that took over some Clan Line ships, registered them in Cape Town and crewed them with South Africans, where possible. Although B&C interest continued, Safmarine absorbed the Springbok ships in 1961, almost doubling its fleet.

Further pressure brought two mailships to the South African register.

However, once trade sanctions threatened, both Unicorn and Safmarine flagged out most of their vessels.

In 1971, the South African-registered Nahoon arrived in Abidjan where a large conference of African

leaders was taking place. Unicorn officials were horrified to hear, via British and South African news bulletins, that the master had been arrested and the ship detained.

"Not true," responded the master wryly to hurried inquiries from Durban. "I was simply asked not to work cargo and to instruct the crew not to proceed ashore."

With the full knowledge of West African authorities, Nahoon was renamed later, flagged in Panama, and continued trading to the region.

While political factors have less bearing on flagging, other obstacles continue to discourage the growth of the South African register. At the Wista debate, the reasoned voice of Professor John Hare of UCT's department of shipping law spelt out that cabotage regulations on their own were dead in the water. Rather, bundles of maritime legislation need to be revised before cabotage can be introduced. It is one

thing to compel coastwise cargoes to be carried in locally-flagged ships; it's another to attract owners to the South African registry, especially in the face of unfriendly labour legislation, the current ranking of bank mortgages on ships and the absence of a local tonnage tax system.

If cabotage brought more ships to the local register, they would need to be crewed by South Africans, thus creating more job opportunities – one of the positive spin-offs associated with cabotage.

An extension of cabotage is the reservation of a portion of foreign trade to be carried by local ships, as legislated by several countries, including India. Every ton of cargo passing through South African ports is moved by foreign vessels, as the only locally-flagged ships are tugs, fishing-related vessels, the Antarctic supply ship and a solitary Safmarine containership that does

not trade here.

Besides the absence of local ships in our harbours, most of the charter fixtures for major mineral exports and the country's crude oil imports are negotiated abroad, meaning that the brokerage and freight on such transactions are paid to foreigners when competent locals could do the job. Emotive stuff indeed.

Perhaps one needs to step back from a direct debate on cabotage, and consider the level that shipping is accorded in South Africa. How many times, one wonders, is the word even mentioned in parliament? Crashed taxis and trashed trains gain the limelight, yet which form of transport moves 90% of the country's trade?

It's time to prioritise shipping in the national forum. And the enthusiastic Wista are perhaps the folks to lead the charge.

brian@ingpen.ucape.school.za