

[Retour à la page principale](#)
[Back to the main page](#)

[Retour au sommaire](#)
[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM, SOCIAL RESEARCH AND
CONFLICT RESOLUTION
IN
THE GREAT LAKES SUB-REGION**

**Arusha, Tanzania, 27-30 March 1995
Conference Proposal**

ACADEMIC FREEDOM, SOCIAL RESEARCH AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE GREAT LAKES

The scale of the recent tragedy in Rwanda (genocide and mass killings, millions of refugees and displaced persons in the entire sub-region of the Great Lakes, near-total destruction of all social and political institutions...), and the rapidity with which it unfolded (all this happened within a few months, not to say in a few weeks), are virtually unprecedented and pose a serious challenge to humanity in general, and to Africans in particular: that of understanding not only how such a thing could happen, but also how to re-build Rwanda and, more generally, how to find peaceful solutions to conflicts, or at least to prevent them from becoming so violent.

Other cases of mass killings leading to an exodus of large numbers of people had occurred in Rwanda over the past three decades or so. Burundi has also had more than its share of the horrors of what is often called in a rather simplistic way "ethnic conflicts", in which large numbers of people lost their lives. Besides the large scale massacres, there is the whole gamut of human rights violations, tension and insecurity.

Parts of Zaire, Uganda and Tanzania, which share borders with Rwanda and Burundi, are inhabited by people of the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa groups and are hosting millions of refugees of Rwandan and Burundese origin. Refugee camps are infested with diseases and their very existence has serious social and environmental consequences, and there could be an outbreak of new conflicts -- between the refugees and the local communities. The crisis is therefore sub-regional in scope, which is why the proposed conference will also be sub-regional.

The challenge posed by the crisis in the countries of the Great Lakes area is particularly big for research. In instances like this one, social scientists are expected to help in finding answers. Paradigms are questioned. Research capacity and the capacity to analyse become stretched to the utmost. However, social science itself is not value free. Some social scientists may also have had a share in the direct or indirect responsibility for whatever went wrong in Rwanda. The exact role of intellectuals in the dynamics that led to the crisis and in the course of the recent wave of killings therefore needs to be looked into. Their fate in the tragedy of the Rwandan people has also been tragic.

How then can research help in finding lasting solutions to the conflicts in the Great Lakes sub-region? How can some of the prerequisites, such as academic freedom, for research to play an effective role in conflict resolution be satisfied ?? What are the priorities for social science and, more specifically, for peace research in the countries of the Great Lakes? These are some of the questions that academics are asking.

I - BACKGROUND

Before the outbreak of the recent crisis, the degree of academic freedom in Rwanda varied from almost nil to relatively high, depending on whether one was a Hutu or a Tutsi, or on how close one was to the government of the day. Being from a region different from that of the former head of state and involvement in the struggle for the respect of human rights, democracy and social justice also made of some Hutu intellectuals targets of repression.

Since the 1959 events which led many Tutsi to flee the country, the latter have however been subjected to harassment more than the Hutu, and among the Hutu, academic freedom was generally inversely proportional to the degree of involvement in the struggle for democracy and human rights.

On the other hand, some academics were caught up in the ideological war and ended up defending theses which were difficult to justify on scientific "grounds. Such academics have a responsibility in the legitimization of the oppressive order which prevailed by producing a discourse on ethnicity which was less than satisfactory from a scientific viewpoint.

Students belonging to both groups (Hutu/Tutsi) could pass or fail exams and other tests on the basis of their ethnic affiliation, regardless of what their actual grades were. The decisions taken by a given teacher were sometimes imposed on him/her and sometimes seen as an act of militancy.

The universities being where most state functionaries, teachers and other public and private officials receive their training, their role in reproducing the bases for conflicts was crucial (which is why, like other universities elsewhere, governments are so keen about controlling them). They can also play a very important role in the promotion and dissemination of new values of tolerance, respect for the human person, etc. The academic community can also initiate a dialogue (which is presently lacking) among people of different ethnic backgrounds.

However, the university is also one of the institutions to be re-built in the post-crisis period, while being one of the key actors of the reconciliation and reconstruction processes.

In the course of the recent crisis, as much as a quarter of the academic staff of one of the campuses of the Université Nationale du Rwanda were killed. Some reports have advanced the astounding figure of 60 % of the cadres of the teaching profession and 50 % of the cadres of the medical and para-medical professions as having been killed.

The issue therefore is both one of academic freedom and of the social responsibility of academics. There is a clear need for further research on conflict situations, and a need for the rehabilitation of social science teaching and research in the region of the Great Lakes. This implies strict adherence to the rules, and use of techniques of scientific inquiry. It presupposes academic freedom, i.e. the

freedom of researchers, teachers, students etc. to conduct research, teach, publish and so on; and the effective use of research results as teaching material and as a basis for policy making.

CODESRIA's very constituency is what is at issue here, both from the angle of social science research promotion and support to researchers and research institutions, and from the angle of the protection of academic freedom and human rights.

II. PAST ACTIVITIES

CODESRIA was represented at the Humanitarian Workshop on the Region of the Great Lakes, organised by Synergies. The Workshop, which took place at Abedare Country Club, Kenya, August 8- 10, 1994, was the first attempt (and a successful one) to bring together NGOs of Rwanda, Burundi and other countries of the sub-region in a bid to foster a dialogue among them in the search for an appropriate endogenous response to the crisis in the area. CODESRIA's participation in that workshop was quite in line with its concern about the negative impact that the deterioration of the sociopolitical environment and the crisis of human rights has on intellectual freedom and on research itself. Moreover, CODESRIA's aim is to contribute towards building African capacity to find solutions' to the conflicts in the continent'. Hence 'the idea of a conference on the Rwandan tragedy was being discussed within CODESRIA since late May - early June this year.

Given its track record in the promotion of social research and in the provision of support to African academics in distress, CODESRIA was therefore asked by the participants at the Humanitarian Workshop to organise a conference on academic freedom and the role of research, teaching and communication in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes sub-region.

Other CODESRIA activities that are directly related to the issues that the proposed conference will address include an international symposium on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of the Intellectual which led to the adoption of the Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom (Kampala, November 1990), and international workshops on ethnic conflicts in Africa (at the first one, which took place in Bujumbura in 1991, the emphasis was on research methodologies; the second one was held in Nairobi in 1992).

The workshops on ethnic conflicts were part of the activities undertaken by CODESRIA's Multinational Network on "Ethnic Conflicts in Africa". Another CODESRIA Multinational research Network has just completed the first phase of its work on "Social Movements in Africa" The books with the results of the research conducted by these networks will soon be published.

The proposed Conference will therefore be a step further in CODESRIA's endeavors to promote social science research on ethnic, religious and other types of conflicts and conflict resolution in

Africa. It will also be a follow-up to the Humanitarian Workshop, organised by Synergies in Kenya early August.

Moreover, in addressing the different issues raised in the course of the current crisis in the Great Lakes sub-region, many issues that social science is trying to grapple with in Africa will also be addressed: ethnic conflicts, democracy (particularly the issue of minority rights and minority majority relations and state power), refugees... CODESRIA

III - OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference is meant to provide a forum for the intellectuals of the Great Lakes sub-region. It should enable them to come together and to meet with other researchers from the African intellectual community who have done research on the Great Lakes sub-region, or who have had some experience in peace research/conflict analysis or conflict resolution. They should therefore be able to reflect and begin a dialogue on the search for a peaceful solution to the crisis in the area.

The scope and recent nature of the crisis, the highly emotional character of the issues to be discussed and their relevance to the rest of Africa make it necessary for CODESRIA to take the lead in the search for an appropriate, African response to the crisis in the Great Lakes sub-region.

The main objective of the conference is to launch a process that could lead to peace, and to the rehabilitation of the social sciences in the region of the Great Lakes through the promotion of scientific methods and standards in research and intellectual activity, through the dissemination of the research results in various ways, and through teaching and communications.

Concerning Rwanda, more specifically, this means:

- a) highlighting what is at stake in relation to the history, ideology, religions, state power etc. in the country and encouraging the rigorous collection of data and strict adherence to the rules of scientific research;
- b) looking at ways of (re-)building proper local and subregional academic communities which would be doing research on popular discourses and practices in conflict resolution etc; ways of disseminating (for purposes of conflict prevention) research results and existing knowledge among social actors and populations will also be examined;
- c) reflecting on the responsibility of lecturers and teachers in the training of school teachers and the reproduction of racist and ethnicist ideologies;

d) reflecting on the conditions for the existence of, and how to build a state that will cease to be seen by the different ethnic groups as being an exclusively "Hutu" or "Tutsi" state, within a democratic setup;

e) reflecting on how to find solutions to the structural problems of the economy.

IV - THEMES

The following sub-themes have therefore been chosen for discussion during the conference:

1) Ethnicity, Nation Building and Human Rights in the Countries of The Great Lakes. One of the most critical issues in divided societies is that of the identification of the state with specific groups only, leaving the others with the feeling of being isolated. This has actually been the case in Rwanda too, where the state has been highly repressive, to the extent of being in some ways comparable to the apartheid state that was in South Africa. Discriminatory practices based on differences in ethnic identities, regions of origin, religion and political affiliation have led to serious human rights violations.

Few are the countries in Africa where the issues of ethnicity and human rights in the processes of nation and state building could be said to have been resolved, or at least addressed in a democratic way. Ethnic identities, which are essentially historical and social constructs, are in conflict with what are held to be "national" interests or "state security", and these and other conflicts are often resolved through the use of force or even violence. The recent crises in the countries of the Great Lakes have shown how crucial it is for Africans to find lasting, peaceful solutions to the conflicts of an ethnic or other nature in the continent which are closely linked to the question of democracy, and to the nature and legitimacy of the state.

What then are conditions for the existence of a state that will be legitimate in the eyes of all Rwandans (and not only of one section or group), for instance? For there to be a definitive end to both authoritarianism and the processes of exclusion which, in Rwanda, have so far led the excluded to exile with the prospects of returning only through a change of government (not to say of state personnel!), the issues of state legitimacy human rights and democracy and, by the same token, of a new social contract, need to be addressed. They will therefore be discussed at this conference.

2) African Research on Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts, African Experiences in Conflict Resolution: Some Lessons.

Despite, or may be precisely because of the persistence of some of the long standing ethnic conflicts and the emergence of new ones in Africa, a great deal of research on ethnicity, ethnic conflicts and conflict resolution is being conducted in Africa. As stated above, CODESRIA's multinational network on ethnic conflicts is one of those conducting research on such issues. What are the lessons that researchers have begun to draw from this research activity? Of what relevance are these lessons for the crises in the Great Lakes sub-region? This conference can help in examining the relevance of some of the lessons to Rwanda and other countries in the area and in finding ways of linking social research to policy making, teaching, extension and communications for peace. Similarly, the experiences of other African countries in the peaceful resolution of conflicts will also be examined.

3) Academics and Ethnic Conflicts: Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility.

Members of the academic community (defined in the Lima, Dar-es-Salaam and Kampala Declarations on Intellectual Freedom as covering "all those persons teaching, studying, researching and working at an institution of higher education") should be individually and collectively free "in the pursuit development and transmission of knowledge, through research, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation, teaching, lecturing and writing". For the academic communities of the Great Lakes area, this is absolutely essential if they are to participate fully in clarifying and creating the basis for new social contracts and sustainable development processes, both of which are essential for peace in the sub-region.

Furthermore, the fate and role of intellectuals in the Rwandan crisis make it indeed timely to revisit the issues of intellectual freedom and social responsibility at this conference, which is scheduled to take place exactly four years after the Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility was adopted (November 29, 1990).

Academic freedom also calls for social responsibility and strict adherence to scientific norms in research and publishing. The acquisition of research skills and promotion of scientific methods are therefore essential. There is a need to encourage scientific ways of gathering documentary evidence (such evidence is indispensable). This means promoting the specific "déontologies" of historians, sociologists, political scientists, economists, jurists, and other social scientists, urging academics to have a sense of belonging to a scientific community, i.e. to identify with and adhere to the requirements of a proper scientific community--following, and debating issues at various levels, cross-referencing, peer review and criticism...

The universities and other tertiary institutions of learning are the places where teachers and many extension workers are trained. Yet school teachers have reportedly been leading gangs of students in attacks against other students, teachers and civilians of rival ethnic groups. School text books, particularly in subjects such as history, may have to be re-written all over in the

perspective of a new social order where peace would reign. Results of scientific research should be the material on which all social science teaching manuals should be based. Similarly, extension workers should be steeped in a peace-oriented philosophy, given the role they play in the development process--this is particularly true of NGO and rural extension workers generally.

4) Religion, Culture and Conflict Resolution

The "reflective capacities" of societies are not restricted to what academics say. Politicians, artists, writers, journalists, religious leaders also analyse social realities, influence opinions and participate in the control and management of individual and collective behaviors in society. Some of the discourses produced at this level of society are directly inspired by academic discourses. Others are not. Their importance and impact on the course of events in the subregion are however too big to be ignored in the peace-making process.

This conference should therefore look into ways of involving religious leaders, artists, writers, journalist, human rights activists, politicians and social workers in the promotion of a new culture, a culture of peace, and in the dissemination of new values and traditions.

V - DATE AND VENUE

The Conference is scheduled to take place in one of the countries of the Great Lakes sub-region, Tanzania (Arusha), within a reasonable time frame (what is needed for papers to be commissioned and other practicalities sorted out) after funds are secured for it. We want the Conference to be held during the last week of March 1995 and it should last for 4 days.

Organising the conference in one of the countries of the subregion will be a good way for CODESRIA and for the African intellectual community to participate in the process of reconciliation and reconstruction in Rwanda, as well as in the other countries of the sub-region. The universities and academic community of the sub-region, it is hoped, would benefit from such a move. Gains will however be shared with the participants from the rest of Africa because of the very nature of the Conference.

CODESRIA has already had the experience of organising an international symposium in an African country undergoing a re-construction process (the Academic Freedom symposium of 1990 which took place in Makerere University, Uganda), and the impact was great.

VI - PAPERS

About 15 to 20 papers will be presented, a maximum of 4 per session/half-day/sub-theme (presentations lasting 15 to 20 minutes each). Background papers will be commissioned for each theme.

Apart from the presentations in the plenary sessions, some of the background papers will be presented in panels and round table discussions.

VII- POST-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

A selection of the papers presented at the conference will be published by CODESRIA in a book (with English and French editions).

CODESRIA would also be keen to collaborate with academics of the countries of the region of the Great Lakes in setting up National Working (research) Groups who would work on issues of concern to these countries, such as ethnicity, democratisation, conflict resolution, social policies and human rights. The conference should therefore be an occasion to refine this project and look into the practical ways of implementing it. For Rwandese academics in particular, forming a national working group could help them in resuming research activity and in re-conceptualising issues dealt with in teaching manuals in a perspective of reconstruction.

VIII - PARTICIPANTS

Apart from the academics of the region and ministries of Education of Rwanda and Burundi, Human Rights Organisations and NGOs, churches, unions of journalists, writers etc. of the subregion and CODESRIA, other invitees will come from organisations such as the African Academy of Sciences, UNESCO (Culture of Peace Division), African Rights, Union Interafricaine des Droits de l'Homme, International Commission of Jurists, SYNERGIES, African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, Nairobi Peace Initiative, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International, Federation Internationale des Droits de l'Homme, the UN Centre for Human Rights, International Alert, Africa Watch, the donor community and the press. We will ask Bishop Desmond Tutu (a Nobel Laureate for Peace), and former President Nyerere, to be keynote speakers. Consequently, there will be 6 categories of participants, totalling about 85 people:

1) Academics, most of whom will be drawn from the universities in Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania Uganda, Zapre and Kenya = 20.

2) Other African scholars and personalities who have some expertise in the study of the societies of the Great Lakes sub-region, or who have had or studied relevant experiences in Conflict resolution elsewhere will also participate = 14.

3) Non-African scholars whose positions are somewhat identical to those of category 2 above. Most of these participants are expected to come from institutions such as Institut Universitaire d'Etudes du Développement (Geneva), the University of Lille etc. most of whom are expected to secure funds for their participation = 5.

4) African religious leaders, writers, journalists, artists, human rights activists, NGO staff and politicians from the sub-region will also be invited (14 from Rwanda & Burundi, and 12 from the rest of Africa and from the other countries) = 26.

5) International Human Rights organisations (Amnesty, Human Rights Watch/Africa, International Alert, FIDH, International Commission of Jurists), UN Human Rights Centre, UNESCO, The African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights and OAU, all of which are involved in monitoring conflict situations or in conflict resolution; most of these participants are expected to pay for their own participation: 10.

6) The press: African Press (4+2 local press): 6 and International Press: 4

Total = 85

IX - BUDGET

US\$

Air Tickets:

Bujumbura (10x376)	3760
Kigali (10x376)	3760
Nairobi (5x262)	1572
Kampala (3x238)	714
Zaire (5x1027-including 2 from Kinshasa)	5135

Other African Countries (average: 19x\$1500)	28500
---	-------

African Participants from Europe (average: 4x\$3966)	9830
African Press (4x\$1500)	6000

Pre-conference travel	<u>6000</u>
-----------------------	-------------

SUB-TOTAL AIR TICKETS 65725

Per diem (including hotel costs for participants from outside Tanzania: 60X\$138x6days)	49680
Per diem for local participants (10x\$70x4days)	2800

Conference facilities:	
hall (\$100x4)	400
interpreting equipment	1800
stationery	250
Interpreters (3x\$504x4days)	6048
Commissioning papers	6000
Reproducing papers (\$0.15x25papers, program etc. x 20pages x 100 copies)	7500
Rapporteur	1000
Coffee breaks (\$4x85persx4days)	1360
Communications (telephone, fax, DHL, telex...)	<u>2000</u>

SUB-TOTAL 78838

TOTAL (I+II)	144563
Administrative costs and contingencies (10%)	<u>14456</u>

GRAND TOTAL 159019