Commerce for Conflict or Constructive Change: An Integrative Contrast of Two Cases--the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Africa (SA)

Alfie van der Zwan  
University of the Witwatersrand and The Resolve Group, SA  
Susan A. Lynham  
Texas A&M University, USA and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, SA  
Robert G. Taylor  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, SA

Abstract

This article explores whether there is a role that business can play in national conflict resolution and transition in the DRC. The example of business in South Africa’s transition has been selected to serve as a comparative guideline for the role which business can play in resolving the conflict in the DRC and its transition to democracy. This contrasting example is used because of its ability to illustrate the various roles played by business in the social, economic and political transition in SA. It also clearly illustrates examples of Track Two Diplomacy (Diamond & McDonald, 1996), a conceptual framework advocated for studying business as an inhibitor or enabler of national conflict resolution and transition.

Key words: Commerce and conflict, Track II diplomacy, Business and society

The purpose of studying history is not to deride human action, nor to weep over it or to hate it, but to understand it – and then to learn from it as we contemplate our future.  
-- Nelson Mandela --

National conflict and conflict resolution have traditionally been viewed as areas falling within a state’s realm of control as such conflict situations are caused by the state’s inability to avert interstate or intrastate unrest, instability and war. It has therefore been expected that it is the duty of the state to embark on national conflict resolution as they are best suited to do so and have the power and knowledge to mend their own or other state’s errors (Zadek & Raynard, 2004). With the advent of globalization, actors outside of the state have grown in influence in the international system and it has been acknowledged that these actors have significant influence on the environments and nations in which they operate (Malan, 2005; Visser, McIntosh & Middleton, 2006).

A growing area of focus is the influence of business on the state. Recently the role of business in national conflict has been publicized with specific emphasis being placed on the role of business in the exploitation of natural resources, and through this exploitation, the continuation of the conflict (Visser, McIntosh & Middleton, 2006). An example of such a role being played by business, and the focus of this article, is the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). With business contributing to the conflict and with outside mediation efforts failing to bring peace, exploration of how business can end its negative influence on the conflict and whether it can play a positive role in bringing peace is both timely and needed (Visser, 2006).

In the past, business, when acting in conflict zones, has been seen to and sometimes has taken advantage of the national instability and contributed to the ensuing conflict. To date, business has played a negative role in the conflict in the DRC. While important to eradicate this negative role, it should be explored if and how business can play a positive role in resolving conflicts and rebuilding nations. During South Africa’s transition from apartheid to democracy business played a valuable role in aiding the negotiations and peace process (Chapman & Wrighton, 2005; Fourie & Eloff, 2005; Lynham, Taylor & Dooley, 2005; Lynham, Taylor, Dooley, & Naidoo, 2006a; Lynham, Taylor, Naidoo, & Dooley, 2006b). Described in 16 data themes resulting from a 23-participant study conducted over multiple years by Lynham and Taylor (Lynham et al, 2005; Lynham, et al, 2006a, b), this case is used to illustrate that business can
play a positive role in national conflict resolution and transition and serves as an example from which to explore whether business can play such a role in the DRC.

It should be noted that this article integrates the outcomes of two separate but interacting case studies. The first, by van der Zwan (2005), is an historical, descriptive and exploratory case study that examined whether business could play a positive role in conflict resolution and transition in the DRC, and whether the role played by business in SA’s transition to democracy, specifically by the business leadership of the Consultative Business Movement (CBM), could be used to inform related challenges in the DRC. The second, by Lynham and Taylor, is a descriptive phenomenological study (conducted over three years) of the lived experience of business leadership of the SA business leaders involved in the CBM and thus in the national conflict resolution during the decade preceding the advent of democracy in the country. This second case (focused on the CBM) was used to contrast and inform the findings of the first (focused on the DRC).

The resulting integrative and comparative inquiry is illustrated by way of five parts. The first presents the aims of the study together with the corresponding hypothesis, research questions, method and limitations. The second briefly describes the two theoretical frameworks used to inform the integration of the two cases. The next describes the two cases (the DRC and the CBM in SA) and their key findings. The fourth briefly revisits the address of the research questions. Finally, a short conclusion is offered.

Hypothesis, Research Questions, Method and Limitations

The past is a rich resource on which we can draw to make decisions for the future. -- Nelson Mandela --

The aim of this integrative case analysis (Merriam, 1985; Yin, 2003) is to examine whether business can play a constructive role in national conflict resolution and transition in the DRC, using the contrasting role played by business in South Africa’s transition as an example. Given the negative role played in the conflict in the DRC thus far, it is important to see how this role might be reversed. A further aim is to inform a little explored avenue of thought on the role of business in national conflict resolution in Africa (Visser, 2006), with the hope that doing so can inform business in playing a more active role in this regard national (Chapman & Wrighton, 2004; Fourie & Eloff, 2005; Lynham, et al., 2005, 2006a, b). Given these aims the following hypothesis was constructed to direct the inquiry.

To date, business has played a negative role in conflicts in Africa. However, from a leadership and economic perspective, it is quite possible for business to play an important (and constructive) role in bringing about a lasting peace and smooth transition to democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Five research questions were used to guide the inquiry:

1. What role has business played in the conflict in the DRC thus far?
2. What role did business play in South Africa’s transition to democracy?
3. What made the Consultative Business Movement (CBM) (business) effective in the role it played in South Africa’s transition?
4. Can these elements be applied to the situation in the DRC?
5. Can business play a meaningful role in bringing about a lasting peace and a smooth transition to democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo?

This case analysis has relied on a combination of historical and phenomenological inquiry and content analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2005). Historical and other related information on the DRC and SA were gathered using primary and secondary texts obtained from the University of Witwatersrand, Wits Business School, University of Johannesburg, UNISA, University of KwaZulu-Natal, and the Texas A&M University libraries. Primary data were gathered in the form of semi-structured interviews and used to further triangulate the case data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1985; Van Manen, 1990).

As in all inquiry there are a number of limitations to be made explicit. In the information gathering process a major limitation was the lack of literature on the positive role business has and can play in national conflict resolution and transition, particularly in Africa. With regard to...
gathering information on the case of business in SA’s transition interviews was used to address this gap. The body of conceptual literature on the role of business in national conflict resolution and transition is growing. This article hopes to contribute to the coverage of the topic.

As this research examines the role of business in the cases of South Africa and the DRC, it is apparent that the contextual differences between the two cases limits the application of the SA example to the DRC. However, by extracting the core themes from both case studies on the factors that enabled the success of business in SA (Chapman & Wrighton, 2004; Fourie & Eloff, 2005; Lynham et al., 2005, 2006a,b), we were able to contrast them with the case of the DRC. The involvement of business in national conflict resolution and transition is limited by the fact that these areas are seen typically as those of state concern, and therefore business may not look to invest time and money in aiding these processes. Hopefully this research will help inform overcoming this limiting perspective through arguing that being made aware of the role that they can play, and the benefits of having influence over determining the state of the national environments in which they operate, organisations will become increasingly involved.

The Two Informing Theoretical Frameworks

We have relied primarily on two theoretical works to inform this inquiry. The first is the conceptual approach encompassed in the liberal perspective (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Liberal theory takes an optimistic view of human nature and has faith in human reason. Liberals recognize that individuals are self-interested and competitive up to a point (Ballentine and Nitzschke, 2004). Conceptualizing the role of business in national conflict, Ballentine and Nitzschke offer:

… the exploitation of and trade in lucrative natural resources has become, in many conflict settings, a major source of revenue for governments and rebel forces to generate personal wealth and sustain their military campaigns. The ability of combatants to translate their often ill-gotten assets into war-fighting capacity critically depends on their access to the largely unregulated global financial, commodity, and arms markets. Among peace and security policy-makers, efforts to curtail resource flows that fuel armed conflict has involved not only direct economic sanctions against combatant parties but also renewed concern over the role of companies in the extractive industries that are often unwitting intermediaries between local war economies and global commodity markets.

They continue: “This concern is manifested in the growing number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private sector, and multilateral intergovernmental initiatives that seek to address the complex challenges posed by the intersection of commerce and conflict” (p.1). This theoretical perspective emphasizes that not only states, but other actors such as individuals and business, too, can influence the international system, and allows us to acknowledge that business can play a role in state and international affairs, and hence in related conflict and conflict resolution (Jackson & Sorenson, 2003). The ensuing intersection, between commerce and conflict, is a complex one. One approach for exploring this intersection is Track Two Diplomacy, our second informing framework.

One of our strongest weapons is dialogue.

Track Two diplomacy (Chigas, 2003; Diamond & McDonald, 1996; McDonald, 1991) encompasses a number of activities involving unofficial nongovernmental citizen interactions between parties in a conflict. The ultimate goal of such interactions is to help resolve the conflict through encouraging communication, understanding, and collaboration towards shared problem solving. Part of a broader theory of multi-track diplomacy developed by Diamond and McDonald (1996) their theoretical perspective advocates that the expertise for dealing with conflict does not reside solely with government personnel or procedures. They further state that citizens of a variety of backgrounds and skills have the ability to contribute to diplomatic processes, and that Track Two diplomacy is based on the central assumption that unofficial discussions and meetings
provide latitude not generally available in formal settings. This freedom offers the opportunity to 1) examine the root causes of and the underlying human needs in conflicts, 2) explore possible solutions out of public view, 3) identify obstacles to better relationships, and 4) look ahead at issues not yet on the official agenda. Furthermore, through face-to-face communication participants are helped to 5) further the dehumanization process, 6) overcome psychological barriers, 7) focus on relationship building, and 8) reframe the conflict as a shared problem that can be overcome collaboratively (Chigas, 2003). Such activities can take the form of problem solving workshops and seminars, the involvement of mediators or consultants, confidence building meetings, private one-on-one diplomacy, and parties acting as messengers between parties. This freedom allows greater exploration of the root causes of the conflict and possible solutions, free from the public eye, the latter which often adds pressure and stress to the negotiations. Key to this informal approach is the development of personal relationships and the building of trust, which greatly contribute to the constructiveness of the negotiating process.

The main aim of Track Two Diplomacy is to develop a mutual understanding of differing perceptions and needs, and create new ideas and strong problem solving relationships. Resolving the conflict through such relationship building reduces anger, fear, tension, and improves communication and mutual understanding.

The approach taken by the Consultative Business Movement (CBM) in the South African case is used as an example of Track Two Diplomacy. Lynham et al. (2006a, b) help conceptualize business role within this framework:

…There is an important role for business that derives from increasing corporate responsibility for the general condition of society and the morality of that society’s practices. Corporate activity and individual experiences of corporate life undoubtedly play a significant role in shaping the perspectives and behaviour of people and hence society in general (p.182).…The capacity of businesses to shape the value base of society at large is significantly underestimated, as indeed is the role of businesses as vehicles for meaningful social change. (p.183)

By integrating these two theoretical perspectives we were able to integrate and contrast the two cases (DRC and SA) and show how business influences society and moral corporate activity is able to have a moral influence on society, therefore effecting positive change. Through directly and indirectly taking action which will benefit society, business is able to effect change. It is through such moral action that business can play a role in national conflict resolution and transition.

The Cases and Findings

Through force, fraud, and violence, the people of North, East, West, Central and Southern Africa were relieved of their political and economic power and forced to pay allegiance to foreign monarchs.

-- Nelson Mandela --

Situated in central Africa, our first case focuses on the DRC. Our second and comparative case is located in South Africa, a country renowned for its history of conflict and for its successful navigation through this oppressive past. We provide a brief description of each, together with their key findings.
Africa, more than any other continent, has had to contend with the consequences of conquest in a denial of its own role in history, including the denial that its people had the capacity to bring about change and progress.  

-- Nelson Mandela --

A history of conflict.

Imperialism means the denial of political and economic rights and the perpetual subjugation of the people by a foreign power.  

-- Nelson Mandela --

The DRC was formed out of Belgian King Leopold’s desire for colonies in Africa. In 1885, at the Berlin Conference, he officially gained the Congo as his personal colony (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Following many years of oppression at the hands of the colonial powers who sought the states’ mineral wealth, the Congo gained independence in June 1965. During the period that followed, Cold War tensions spilled into the Congo as a standoff rose between the prime minister and the president. During this turmoil, Joseph Mobutu, a young Colonel who was supported by the United States (US), intervened and had President Kasavubu restored to power, an act which was to later line him up to seize power (Wikipedia, 2005). As a result of his success and international support, Mobutu grew in stature and in 1965 he overthrew Kasavubu establishing a one-party state (Kabemba, 1999).

With the end of the Cold War in the early 1990’s there was a cooling of relations between the US and the DRC. Sensing this decreased support, the opposition began to press for reform. Subsequently, in 1996, following the extension of a period of national transition and the exclusion of opposition parties from the coalition government, unrest grew and tensions rose. These tensions were heightened with the inflow of Hutu refugees from Rwanda and the conflict between them and the banyamulenga Tutsis in the Congo. Following the ordered expulsion of the Tutsis from the Congo by Mobutu, the Alliance des forces Democratiques pour lu liberation du Congo-Zaire (ADFL), led by Laurent Kabila and supported by Uganda and Rwanda, seized power and forced Kabila into exile (Europa World Yearbook, 2004).

While there is no doubt that the 2006 election was a historic event, and that the government is working towards peace and the rebuilding of the country, there is still unrest, particularly in the east of the country. Rebel groups have begun to disarm, but there are still those willing to fight to maintain their grip on the natural resources in order to enrich themselves, perpetuating these resources as a major source of conflict in the country and region. With the UN’s limited extention of their mission to the DRC, it is vital that the impact of natural resources in fuelling the conflict be examined in order to put an end to this source of conflict and unrest, and to rather leverage it to rebuild the nation and build sustainable peace (Ayalon-Metser & Lieberman, 2007).

The role of business in the conflict.

No true alliance can be built on the shifting sands of evasions, illusions and opportunism.  

-- Nelson Mandela --

Most of Africa is desperately poor. Seventy percent of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa surviving on less than $2 a day, and it is estimated that 200 million people go hungry in Africa daily. This level of poverty makes natural resources prized across the continent. Much of the conflict in the Great Lakes region (a region of Central Africa) can be attributed to the possession of natural resources or lack thereof. The DRC is coveted by its neighbours and Western powers...
for many reasons. Economically it is rich in strategic minerals, such as Coltan, used for hi-tech industry. Furthermore, it is a large country, with much fertile soil, has a large population, and is strategically situated in Africa, bordering nine other countries.

The presence of organizations willing to do business, or to buy natural resources which have been acquired in the DRC, has and continues to play a significant role in the continuation of the national conflict. The various state owned organizations and initiatives of Zimbabwe, Rwanda and the DRC have capitalized through illegally mining minerals and metals, leading to massive profits (UN Panel of Experts, 2001). The presence of private companies has played a significant role, too. Not only have they acted as willing buyers for the gold, diamonds, coltan and other resources, but they have also knowingly played a role in exporting goods to the DRC’s neighbours, and then on to Europe. In some cases the simple presence of organizations, regardless of their intentions, has been a source of revenue for the rebel groups through issuing licences to mine and occupy land. (UN Panel of Experts, 2001).

Knowing the mineral wealth they were gaining access to for a tremendously low price, these organizations have willingly paid what was required playing a notable role in the continuation of the national conflict. In this way organizations in the DRC have exhibited a poor sense of their obligation to the communities in which they operate. Whether through ignorance or taking deliberate advantage of the political situation, they have aided the continuation of one of the bloodiest conflicts the continent has ever seen.

The key findings.

A movement without a vision is a movement without moral foundation. -- Nelson Mandela --

Through a formal content analysis of the historical materials used (van der Zwan, 2005) four elements were highlighted as composing the regional dynamics of the DRC region. They are: (a) personal relationships—e.g., between Mugabe, Nujoma and Kabila; (b) the quest for greater power as sought by Zimbabwe in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and Uganda and Rwanda in the region; (c) ethnic tensions, particularly centred around the Banyamulenge Tutsis; and (d) the quest for natural resources and wealth as pursued by Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe and various militia. Furthermore, three main sources of conflict in the DRC and Great Lakes (Central African) region could be identified. These sources include the problems arising out of colonial control in Africa, the support of African countries by Western world countries during the Cold War, and the distribution and contestation of natural resources in Africa.

Discoveries that informed an understanding of the conflict, and, in part, business’s role therein, included three main channels of exploitation of the natural resources from the DRC. The first is foreign governments occupying areas of the DRC who use their military, or other means, to mine the natural resources, which are then either sold to companies who transport the resources to world markets, or are transported back to their own countries where they are then sold. The second involves rebel groups who have mined the natural resources which are then transported by companies to markets around the world where they are sold, or sold to companies who then sell the products themselves. And thirdly, private or state owned companies who deliberately enter the conflict areas knowing that they are able to operate free from legal constraints preventing them from exploiting workers and damaging the environment. Being able to operate in such an environment enables these companies to carry out their extraction and production activities at a lower cost than anywhere else, and sell them for a greater profit, hence the attraction of doing business in a conflict zone. However evidence was also found of cases where companies have sought to operate in such environments without the goal of taking advantage of the instability caused by the conflict, AngloGold Ashanti being such an example.

Documentation and interview analysis of the role played by business in South Africa, as illustrated by the CBM, resulted in the identification of four primary factors which enabled these businesses to successfully support SA’s transition. First, in the political arena business was a non-partisan third party, yet sought to protect its own interests and optimize its own gains through achieving a successful and peaceful transition. Second was its purposefully low key approach to the situation. Third, because the business leaders involved approached the situation from a financially strong position, they were able to provide resources such as business premises, transport and funding for workshops and conferences which allowed for backroom and behind the
scenes talks. Fourth, through expertise gained in the workplace in dealing with conflict and change, the businesspeople involved were familiar with, and skilled in, finding creative ways to reach agreement and ensure long term reconciliation of problems. Further confirmation and illustration of these four factors is provided by the 16 data themes highlighted in Table 1 in the SA case discussion.

**South Africa (SA)**

History punishes those who resort to force and fraud to suppress the claims and legitimate aspirations of the majority of the country’s citizens.

-- Nelson Mandela --

**A context of conflict.**

We need to reconcile our differences through reason, debate and compromise.

-- Nelson Mandela --

Following decades of oppression at the hands of the apartheid government South Africans began to really push for change in the mid-80’s. The realisation by the leadership of the national government that change was inevitable was signalled by President F.W. De Klerk when he announced the unbanning of the liberation movement parties in his address to parliament on 2nd February 1990. After this historic speech the challenge to all political leaders was to manage the coming transition and to minimise violence during a period when the planned political and constitutional reforms were not yet in place (Gastrow, 1995). The violence seen in the 1970’s and 1980’s, which was directed against the state shifted towards ethnic violence predominantly between African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) members, who were competing for dominance and power in the political transition. The ruling National Party (NP) was unable to control the increasing violence which was undermining every relevant political group in the country and having a debilitating effect on the negotiating process and the path to peace. Many had thought that due to the political changes taking place 1990 would be a precursor to liberation but instead it became a bad year for South Africa as far as political violence and loss of life were concerned, with 3699 people dying in the violence (Gastrow, 2005). However, a series of efforts for peace culminated in the signing of the National Peace Accord (NPA) in September 1991. This event resulted in a significant breakthrough that enabled political leaders to meet, and for peace to be pursued. It was also the first time the world had seen the successful forging of an agreement that brought together all the disparate political parties in an effort to pursue peace in a nation in conflict.

The events, pressures and influences that shaped the process leading to the signing of the NPA…provide a case study of how, despite deep divisions within a plural and multi-ethnic society, and despite a history of conflict, violence and oppression, a convergence of interests can lead to a pact among political leadership to make peace and to jointly move towards democracy. (Gastrow, 2005, p.14)

The SA peace process also provides insight into the invaluable role that third parties, such as church and business leaders, played in the negotiating process as mediators and facilitators.

*The CBM: A case in point.*

When you negotiate you have to accept the integrity of another man.

-- Nelson Mandela --

While the context within business in SA was important, the national circumstance that defined the broader environment within which business operated was deteriorating rapidly. Although business had the predisposition to be remote from political engagement for broader social purpose, SA (especially after 1976) was moving to a point where the ability of business to function as business was becoming untenable. It was from this complex and tense setting that a small group of business leaders emerged in an attempt to contribute to meaningful change (Taylor, 2004). They did so by forming the Consultative Business Movement (CBM), through which they later formalized their role in helping to bring peace to the country (Interview
Participant, 2005). It is this organization that is the focus of the second case study (also see Lynham et al., 2005, 2006a, b).

The CBM was conceptualized in the early 1980’s, formalized in the late 1980’s, and disbanded in the mid-1990’s (Chapman & Wrighton, 2004; Fourie & Eloff, 2005). The purpose of this organization was to “…[challenge] South African business people to ‘define the real nature of their own power, and to identify how they [could] best use this not inconsequential power to advance the society towards non-racial democracy’” (Nel, 1988 as cited in Terreblanche, 2002, p. 79). A remarkable example of socially responsible business leadership, the role played by the CBM is captured in 16 themes derived from a formal content analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the eight interviewees specifically involved in the formative years of the CBM. These themes describe the principles and practices of the influential role they played in national conflict resolution and transition in SA (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Themes Describing the Principles and Practices of the Role Played by Business (the CBM) in National Conflict Resolution and Transition in South Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Acting as Non-partisan Conduits of Political and National Change**  
Demonstrating non-partisanship and consistently acting in a non-partisan manner; Serving and acting as shuttle diplomats, shuttling among various partisan groups for the purpose of relationship building, consensus seeking, negotiated agreement, and movement towards shared commitment, action and outcome |
| **2. Strictly Adhering to Explicitly Agreed Rules of Conduct**  
Consistently acting off strict rules of dialogue and engagement – held and adhered to by all participating business leaders in this movement; Having significant consequences to ongoing participation if rules not adhered to |
| **3. Enrolling a Community of Shared Vision and Values**  
Developing a shared vision of, and commitment to, a democratic, free South Africa in which their grandchildren, and their grandchildren’s grandchildren, could live, thrive and prosper…socially, politically, culturally, and economically; Pursuing a humane and socially, politically, and economically just South Africa for all |
| **4. Listening Deeply, in Order to Understand and Empathize**  
Being willing to unzip one’s skin and listen for deep understanding; Often having to recognize one’s own lack of familiarity and comfort with diverse cultural backgrounds, and listening through these blind spots and moments of discomfort |
| **5. Acting from Deeply Held Personal Leadership Values**  
Believing that everyone is due respect and dignity, regardless of who they are and what they do; Acting with great humility, not seeking the rewards or recognition for their actions |
| **6. Creating Space to Think and Act Fundamentally Differently**  
• Holding conversations in the cracks, in the in-between spaces not on the immediate radar screen of oppressive or opposing forces; Pioneering new interactions, new ways of thinking and doing |

(Table continues)

Copyright © 2007, Alfie van der Zwan, Susan A. Lynham & Robert G. Taylor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. continued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Themes Describing the Principles and Practices of the Role Played by Business (the CBM)</strong> in National Conflict Resolution and Transition in South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Earning Trust and the Authority to Act</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with and being among the people – recognizing that conversations had to include all, and having the patience and persistence to keep meeting and keep talking until change began to happen; Earning the right to stand up and act on behalf of – earning and extending unquestionable trust, and the authority to act, from all parties and players involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Building Bridges through Strategic Conversations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Holding consensus seeking, strategic conversations – and persisting with these conversations through diverse and opposed ideologies, until consensus could be sought and reached; Understanding the importance of ongoing communication to all parties, across all perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. Being Driven by Business Principles and Values</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inventing and pursuing the vision and goal of “socially responsible free enterprise” – bringing the importance of “business with a social and national conscience” to the awareness of business colleagues, governing boards, and business partnerships, and driving business culture changing initiatives to this same end within their respective companies; Understanding that business leadership has a responsibility beyond that of business performance, to the greater good of the environment, too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Leveraging the Power of Quiet Leadership</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Through an agreed code of no personal or collective acclaim, being able to step forward, backward or aside, as needed, to successfully attend to the needs and purpose of the moment; Never seeking recognition or acknowledgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11. Taking Immense Risks and Making Personal Sacrifices</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Taking substantial personal risk and making unusual personal commitments of time, effort, energy, and expertise – often at the sacrifice of family, other personal, and internal company obligations and responsibilities; Having the courage to take stands inside their businesses, too, stands that were risky to their careers and businesses at the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. Leading Change, from the Top</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stepping up, at the top – recognizing the importance of top executive active engagement and leadership involvement in the necessary change processes, and in so doing demonstrating a clear commitment to their businesses to socially conscious change and action; Having the courage to crash system boundaries and to so act across and outside of these boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13. Engaging in Critique followed by Committed Action</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engaging in action committed critique – being prepared to act, often on behalf of, for better, shared and agreed outcomes; Understanding that critique needs to be followed by committed action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14. Acting from a Position of Power</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing that they were acting from a substantial economic power-base, which created space and authority to act and take actions unusual for business in any national context (particularly in the political and social arenas of change); Understanding that ‘together, they could do more’ – that if they banded together they could leverage their collective, critical mass towards a common good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15. Recognizing, Attending to and Leveraging Driving Forces in the Environment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing that the environment provided a unique kind of leverage to lead in different ways; Remaining strategically focused, aware and engaged in the larger national and international environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16. Recognizing and Acting Upon Tipping Point Moments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing and acting on the “tipping point” moments – regardless of effort, time, energy, and commitment required and risk involved; Responding as, when, and where required during numerous nationally defining moments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2005 © S.A. Lynham & R.G. Taylor

Copyright © 2007, Alfie van der Zwan, Susan A. Lynham & Robert G. Taylor
When contrasted with the DRC case findings these themes illustrate a stark difference between the nature of the role of business in national conflict and transition in the two countries. They are also a vivid example of Track Two Diplomacy in action, and clearly confirm the four factors highlighted as critical to the successful role played by business in SA highlighted in the first case study. How integration of the findings from the two cases (the DRC and the CBM) address our research questions is considered next.

**Integrating the Key Findings: Addressing the Research Questions**

Above all the healing process involves the nation, because it is the nation itself that needs to redeem and reconstruct itself.  

-- Nelson Mandela --

Our primary findings warrant revisiting against the original research questions posited in this inquiry. A brief reflection on each follows.

**Research question one:** What role has business played in the conflict in the DRC thus far? 

As illustrated, the role played by business thus far has been a negative one which has contributed to and exacerbated the conflict through aiding the exploitation of natural resources in the country. Organisations have played this role both knowingly and unintentionally. Through profit seeking, organisations have directly sought to take advantage of the instability caused by the conflict and the lack of the rule of law. This has been done through the buying, transporting, illegal mining and the provision of markets for such resources. Furthermore, the presence of organisations alone can fuel the conflict.

**Research question two:** What role did business play in SA’s transition to democracy? In the case discussions it was shown that business played an actively positive role in exploring how they could contribute to bringing peace to SA. They began by playing a role of facilitating understanding between political parties and of each others goals. This role established trust between political parties and paved the way for the future role business was to play. The official secretariat role they played in the peace process developed to include facilitation of talks and backdoor negotiations as well as supporting functions such as scenario planning and shuttle diplomacy. Post-1994 their role evolved to one of peace building and prosperity for mutual gains. This role occurred as a direct result of the positive role they had played in the political process. Organisations were formed with the specific aim of continuing the positive role played by business, but were aimed at peace building through the upliftment of local disadvantaged communities and the prosperity of the economy.

**Research question three:** What made the CBM (SA business) effective in the role it played in SA’s transition? The cases illustrated that the initial building of trust between business and political leaders was a key element for the success of business. The fact that their role was carried out in a low profile manner was also vital as they were able to avoid attention which may have limited their effectiveness. The organisational experience of the business leaders gained in the corporate environment, as well as having financial and other resources at hand, enabled them to effectively aid the peace process when intervention and support was needed. By hosting workshops and talks and facilitating discussion they so aided the political process. The fact that business in SA business also had a vested interest in the success of the peaceful transition, as it would effect their prosperity and profits, greatly contributed to their readiness and commitment to be come involved, thus contributing to their effectiveness.

**Research question four:** Can these elements be applied to the situation in the DRC? As discussed, the elements of trust and a low profile approach are not present and cannot be established and therefore cannot be applied by business in the DRC, which severely limits the possibly of an interaction at the political level. It is possible that mistrust of business is high due to the previously negative role played, and this already publicised negative role would likely lead to any positive intervention being publicised, therefore interfering with its success. Because business in the DRC would benefit from peace, as it would bring stability and certainty of prosperity, if shown how they can contribute to peace it is possible that business would do so. Their corporate experience and financially strong position would allow them to contribute to peace building and the transition to democracy. This could be done separately at the economic and
societal levels, and could also be addressed together as upliftment and education of individuals and communities at the societal level would directly benefit the economy. Therefore, some of the elements which allowed business to be successful in SA can contribute to business playing a positive role in national conflict resolution and transition in the DRC.

Research question five: Can business play a meaningful role in bringing about a lasting peace and a smooth transition to democracy in the DRC? If so how? In the case discussions it was illustrated that due to there being motivation for business to become involved in the peace process, and the fact that the skills and resources are available, business can play a meaningful role in bringing about a lasting peace and smooth transition to democracy. This could be done through the identification of areas in which business as a group, or individual organisations, could aid the peace building and transition process, through forming and contributing to programs and initiatives for social upliftment and reconstruction. In the situation of the DRC, financial resources for training and skills development as well as the availability of jobs is key to this process, and it is in these areas that business can contribute greatly to peace building. Business is also able to use its strategic planning skills to help the state identify and overcome obstacles to a smooth transition.

Conclusion

Let the strivings of all of us prove Martin Luther King, Jnr to have been correct when he said that humanity can no longer be tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war.

-- Nelson Mandela --

In closing it should be noted that this inquiry did not aim to apply the SA experience to the DRC. Instead the SA experience served as an example, not as a framework, from which to explore whether business can play a positive role in the DRC. As was shown, it is highly unlikely that business is able to play a role in resolving the conflict in the DRC at the political level. The element of trust between business and the political parties is not present, and if it were possible, this trust would take too long to establish. However, through applying their other strengths, business could play a role in resolving the conflict, and most significantly, aiding the transition at other levels. By taking the initiative to aid the transition at the societal and economic levels, business would be able to greatly contribute to the building and solidifying of peace. Due to the dependence of business on the elements of these two levels, and the nature of this interaction, business may be better suited to aid the transition phase, because of its knowledge of and dependence on these areas for its prosperity, than other social elements or organisations.

The research questions have thus been answered and in doing so it has been shown that it is possible for business to play a meaningful role in national conflict resolution and transition. The example of South Africa was used because it allows for an in-depth examination of the role of business in various areas and facets of national conflict resolution and transition. Hopefully, in the future the value of this role played by the business leaders of South Africa will not only be seen in their contribution to South Africa’s transition, but also in their leading the way for business to play a valuable role in national conflict resolution and transition in times and contexts to come.

The spirit of Ubuntu – that profound African sense that we are human only through the humanity of other human beings – is not a parochial phenomenon, but has added globally to our common search for a better world.

-- Nelson Mandela --

References

Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*. Victoria, Australia: Deakin University.


*Dedication:* This paper is dedicated to the Loving Memory of Arie van der Zwan, 1947 – 2003, and to all the other members of the CBM who helped bring hope and equality to South Africa when there was none.

*Acknowledgements:* Alfie van der Zwan would like to thank Drs. David Monyae and Abdul Lamin of the University of the Witwatersrand for their guidance and assistance during the course of 2005. The authors would also like to thank Mr. Vassi, Deloitte & Touche Foundation, SA for his support and sponsorship of this project.