The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict

FEAR, DIFFUSION, AND ESCALATION

DAVID A. LAKE AND DONALD ROTHCHILD, EDITORS

Princeton University Press
Princeton, New Jersey 1998
of cases often, but not always, include shifts in win-sets over time. Ethnicity is a charged issue subject to politicization that affects win-sets at levels I and II. In our successful cases of negotiations, we found that agreements were reached not by expanding participation or increasing mobilization, as has often been suggested in the literature on two-level negotiations, but rather through the coproduction of the issue and the demobilization of potentially radical nationalist groups. Thus, instead of politicizing ethnicity, the CGOs actually needed to alter the agenda somewhat, thereby coopting the issue and to some extent depoliticizing it.

The role of institutions was also important in our cases, although in a somewhat specialized manner. Rather than simply specifying rules affecting winning domestic coalitions, the strength of the state and its institutions helped to determine how important level II win-sets would be. Thus, through the use of synergistic policies both Yeltsin and Shamiev attempted to shift the focus of power away from representative institutions. To the degree that nationalism can be used to support a strong presidency, representative institutions within unconsolidated regimes may suffer. Thus, it is not always the coalition or a shift in the coalition and its preferences that is important, but the way that the process of negotiation may actually be used to affect the role of institutions themselves.

Finally, the cases examined showed a shift in the preferences of CGOs in connection with changing domestic political coalitions. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of these shifts was the location of the presidents on the issue of nationalism. Unlike presidents of states involved in open ethnic hostilities, these presidents had not introduced or politicized the issue of ethnicity themselves. Instead, they reacted to its politicization so as to coopt the issue and to build their own legitimacy on the basis of it. This need to depoliticize the issue or at least take it away from potential domestic opposition allowed them, although not without difficulty, to reach compromises leading to successful negotiations. In the instance of Estonia, where Level II win-sets within Estonia and Russia made an agreement particularly difficult, President Meri’s strategy of using third parties neutralized his domestic coalition and changed what was acceptable to his negotiating partner, Boris Yeltsin.

Successful negotiations in the arena of ethnic politics appear to require leaders who are not themselves politicizing ethnicity but rather trying to coopt the issue in order to gain the political support of more moderate groups in society. They attempt to deny the issue to their opponents. In instances where radical forces dominate the domestic scene but all political forces express strong desires to be accepted within the international community, third parties can play a decisive role in creating conditions in which negotiations can be successfully concluded. The nature of leadership is critical in the avoidance of ethnic conflict, particularly within political systems that remain unconsolidated.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Transnational Ethnic Conflict in Africa

EDMOND J. KELLER

Since 1960, Africa has witnessed more than a score of civil wars, and in just the past decade between 2 and 4 million people have died in such wars. In 1993 alone, there were 5.2 million refugees and 13 million displaced persons in Africa. Domestic insecurity in Africa, then, has had an increasingly high propensity to spill over borders, resulting in new regional security dilemmas. For example, in a matter of weeks the 1994 civil war in Rwanda resulted in five hundred thousand deaths, and in more than 3 million refugees fleeing to Zaire and Tanzania. It is clear that what were once thought to be mere domestic conflicts are now increasingly seen as potential sources for regional insecurity. Domestic ethnic conflicts in places such as the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Rwanda have led to intense and bloody internal wars, massive refugee flows, and threats to the continuity of multiethnic nation-states.

Following the analytical framework spelled out by Lake and Rothchild in the introduction, the purpose of this essay is twofold: first, to identify the origins and transformation of ethnic conflicts in selected African states that have on occasion become transnationalized (Lake and Rothchild, Chapter One); second, to identify the factors that contribute to the politicization of ethnicity and those that seem to explain why some incidents of politicized ethnicity spill over national borders and others do not; third, to identify the ways in which the most intense incidents of ethnically based conflict have been dealt with by regional and international institutions; and fourth, to assess the increasing challenges posed to external and regional actors who might consider some form of intervention for the purpose of assisting in the management of domestic conflicts that have or could become transnationalized.

The international community has always found it difficult to broker political solutions to the most severe incidents of ethnic conflict once they have become intense civil wars that have spread regionally (Rothchild 1995, 211). A classic example of this can be seen in the regional morass created when the Rwandan civil war in 1996 spread into eastern Zaire, as Hutu militia took refuge in camps in that region and launched attacks against the Tutsi-led government, prompting elements of the Rwandan army to penetrate into Zaire in hot pursuit. These developments...
opments had devastating consequences for regional security. This and other incidents of transnationalized ethnic conflict are now challenging policymakers to come up with new and more effective approaches to conflict prevention and management.

The discussion is divided into three main sections. The first section attempts to sketch the broad dimensions of the problem in a selected number of African countries, tracing its origins to historical as well as more immediate causes. The second looks at the problem of managing transnational ethnic conflict from an intellectual as well as a policy perspective. The last section examines the policy challenge of transnational ethnic conflict in contemporary Africa.

The Origins of Transnational Ethnic Conflict in Africa

The end of the Cold War and the onset of what is being termed the “new world order” has coincided with and in some cases fueled the politicization of ethnically based nationalism, particularly in Eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. The postwar international political environment had until recently been characterized by ideological competition and conflict between the United States on the one hand and the Soviet Union and Communist China on the other. Both ideological struggle and ideologies as a matter of policy discouraged the representation of groups based upon a distinctive ethnic identity (Ryan 1990, xii-xxi). Instead, there was an active attempt in policy circles to establish the viability of multiethnic states. This tendency in the realm of public policy was reinforced in social science scholarship, which generally ignored ethnic nationalism as a politically salient variable and focused on what was described as the process of national political integration (Young 1993, 21-23). To the extent that it existed and was relevant, scholars generally agreed that ethnic identity was different from nationalism in that it did not require separation from a given multiethnic state and the creation of an ethnically pure nation state. Today, however, in parts of Eastern Europe and Africa, the notion of the inviolability of artificially created nation states is being seriously challenged, as ethnic groups assert their right to self-determination up to and including separation from the multiethnic state. With the demise of Soviet communism, ethnically based republics that had been forcefully incorporated into the Soviet Empire took advantage of openings in the political opportunity structure, and acted upon their claim to self-determination by cutting their ties to Russia (Esman 1994, 10). Crawford Young notes that in the first years of African independence secessionist movements emerged in eighteen out of fifty-two states, but were largely suppressed (except for the Eritrean struggle for national liberation between 1962 and 1991), until the end of the decade of the 1980s (Young 1993, 29).

In recent years domestic ethnic conflicts have been more common than interstate conflict, and when these conflicts are diffused and escalate, they threaten regional security. Diffusion involves information flows from one state or ethnic community to another state or ethnic community that already contains a high potential for ethnic conflict. The new information, whether true or not, serves to inflame ethnic tensions. Escalation, on the other hand, involves ethnic groups forging alliances with transnational kin groups, with the results often being intentional or unintentional spillovers, interactions, or border conflicts (Lake and Rothchild, Chapter One).

The central question addressed in this section is how, why, and when do ethnic conflicts in Africa become transnationalized? The roots of transnational ethnic conflict can be traced to the perception of ethnic groups that their physical security is in jeopardy at the hands of some other ethnic group or groups (Lake and Rothchild, Chapter One). When such a situation obtains and the state is either unwilling or unable to mediate between states or groups, it may be necessary to engage in a preemptive strike. Myths and memories of exploitation, discrimination, and violence perpetrated on one group by another drive the groups further apart (Gurr 1993, 5-6).

Whether or not ethnic conflicts become transnationalized depends on certain historical and/or immediate circumstances. The historic factors can largely be traced to the invention of tribes, and with the removal of colonial social control mechanisms, the stage was set for the unleashing of tribalism in the post-independence period (Davidson 1992, 11-12). The more immediate causes can be categorized either as precipitant or facilitating factors. Precipitant causes might include economic or political crises with ethnic undertones, inflammatory rhetoric on the part of ethnic entrepreneurs, or real or imagined fears of an ethnic group that incumbent elites are either unwilling or unable to make credible commitments to protect them against ethnic hostilities (Fearn, Chapter Five). Facilitating factors might include the total collapse of international government and/or the availability of massive amounts of weapons of war, as was the case in northeast Africa following the end of the Cold War. The removal of the stabilizing effects of superpower competition in the region made it much more likely that violent ethnic conflicts might occur.

Lake and Rothchild (1996a) note that under conditions of extreme insecurity and ethnic distrust, the situation is ripe for a diffusion and/or escalation of ethnic conflict across borders. Fears are diffused within states and sometimes between them. When there exist kin groups in neighboring states, ethnic conflict can either intentionally or unintentionally become transnationalized. Much depends on political opportunities as perceived by ethnic entrepreneurs. For example, Hutu militia driven out of Rwanda by the Tutsi-led Rwanda Patriotic Front in 1994 continued to wage war from across the border. By 1996 Tutsi soldiers were fighting the Hutu militia inside Zaire, and the Zairean army seemed powerless to do anything about it. In the process, the “softness” and weakness of the Zairean
state was laid bare, giving rise to the emergence of internal rebel groups bent on bringing down the Mobutu regime.

The remainder of this section focuses on five cases that amply illustrate how ethnic conflict has become transnationalized in present-day Africa, particularly since the end of the Cold War. In each of these cases, over time, the primary impetus to transnationalization has shifted. In the case of Somalia in its conflict with Ethiopia over the Ogaden in 1977-1978, the near collapse of the Ethiopian nation state seemed to present an opportunity for the government of the Republic of Somalia to lend massive support to Somali irredentists in Ethiopia's Ogaden region in an effort to recapture what were claimed to be "lost" Somali lands. In other words, Ogadeni Somali irredentism, under conditions of state weakness in Ethiopia, provided the impetus for the escalation of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia as represented in the transnational alliance of Somalis against Ethiopian hegemony.

The conflict between the north and south in Sudan began as a simple quest for social justice on the part of the people of the south, but over the years it has grown into a struggle for self-determination. The diffusion of ethnic fears in the south of northern oppression largely inspired the first Sudanese civil war (1955-1972); and the failure of the Sudan national government to remain true to commitments to political and social equity in the south fueled the second, beginning in 1983.

The third and fourth of our cases, Rwanda and Burundi, represent nicely the recent social construction of distinct and hostile ethnic identities, and the diffusion and escalation of violent ethnic conflict to the point that the scope and the intensity are widened and become transnationalized. The final case, that of the Liberian Civil War, has elements of diffusion and escalation, but is notable in the extent to which political elites, with their personal agendas, manipulated the ethnic factor to secure the support of ethnic kinpeople, while at the same time their movements remained open to alliances with elites from other ethnic groups even as their personal political objectives remained the central focus.

Somali Irredentism

Somalia has traditionally been viewed as an ethnically homogenous state, and therefore, not very likely to be destroyed by ethnic conflict. In fact, outside observers have historically been more concerned with the territorial ambitions of a Somali state than with threats from some Somali leaders alleged to be an historic Somali nation-state. However, what led to the collapse of the Somali state in 1991 was a combination of historical and contemporary factors.

The Somali people can trace their history as far back as 500 B.C. They claim to be the descendants of a single founding father, Samaale, and they are therefore assumed to be related by blood. On the basis of language and culture, the Somalis can be considered a nation, composed of six clan families organized along the lines of a lineage system. These are further broken down into clans, sub-clans, sub-sub-clans, and so on down to the nuclear family (Laitin and Samatar 1987). Traditionally, the Somali people were seen to adhere to no central political authority. Yet the irredentist claims of the Ogaden Somali of Ethiopia is based upon the myth of a unified Somali state that was coterminous with the nation. This fiction became an invented memory, and inspired the Ogaden War of 1977-1978 (Adam 1995). When British and Commonwealth forces liberated Ethiopia as well as British and Italian Somaliland from the Italian fascists in 1941, some British politicians held out hope to the Somalis that life would be given to Greater Somalia once Italian East Africa was dismantled. Many Somalis came to feel this gave legitimacy to their claim to self-determination as a coherent, pristine Somali state. However, this was not to be, as the Horn of Africa was returned to the status quo ante once the British retreated from the area.

In neighboring Ethiopia, following the demise of the imperial regime in 1974, the country descended into a state of virtual anarchy. In addition, the alliance of more than twenty years between the United States and Ethiopia ended, and Ethiopia was vulnerable to enemies both inside and outside the country. It was in this context that the president of Somalia, Siad Barre, decided to commit massive military support to the irredentist claims of Somalis living in Ethiopia's Ogaden region in the process Somali irredentism escalated to include kinspeople from the Republic of Somalia itself (Carment and James 1995).

In June 1977, Ethiopia was invaded by regular Somali military forces and destabilized internally by Ogadeni guerrillas. In other regions of the country the state was being challenged by other ethnic guerrilla movements. The Somali onslaught continued until early 1978, and in the process almost the entirety of the Ogaden fell briefly into Somali hands. However, Ethiopia quickly turned to the Soviet Union and its allies for assistance, and was able by the spring of 1978 to oust the Somali army and to send Ogadeni guerrillas into flight to isolated regions of the country or across the border into Somalia.

When the effort to liberate the Ogaden failed, politics reverted to its traditional intraethnic modality, at times involving whole clan families against other clan families, and at others being confined to sub-clan conflicts. Under normal circumstances this type of conflict might have remained local, but because of the massive amounts of arms in the region as a result of intensive superpower involvement in Cold War competition there, civil war became transnationalized, creating arms and refugee flows back and forth across borders. When civil war broke out in Somalia in the early 1980s, guerrillas from ethnic groups that opposed Siad Barre's clan-based pogrom took refuge in Ethiopia, and for almost a decade relied upon Ethiopia not only for safe haven but also for the military support needed to wage war against the Somali government. A 1988 peace accord between Somalia and Ethiopia forced Somali opposition groups to fight their way back into the country. The ultimate result was the complete collapse of the Somali state in early 1991.

Southern Sudan Separatism

The historic roots of the conflict in Sudan can be traced to two factors: first, Arab slave trade activities in what is presently southern Sudan, and second, the pattern of British colonial rule in Sudan. At roughly the time of the European scramble for Africa, the Sudanese state was consolidating itself under the leadership of the
Islamic spiritual and political personality known as the Mahdi. In the process, the animist and largely Nilotic south was incorporated with the Islamic and Arab north. The south was seen as nothing more than a reservoir of slave labor for sale in various parts of the Arab world. When the British assumed direct administration of Sudan in the late nineteenth century, its administration was relatively lax; in the 1920s, however, it decided to institute formal colonial rule, resulting in the administrative separation of the north from the south. The policy involved the expulsion of all northern Arab and Muslim influences from the south, and allowing the southerners to rule themselves in a traditional manner. In addition, Christian missionaries were allowed to proselytize and to erect schools in the region. At the time, the British tried to orient southern Sudan more toward its colonies south of the Sahara. The three southern provinces were declared closed districts, and Arabs and Muslims were not allowed to travel or trade there. However, as independence approached, it became clear that Britain was prepared to accede to political forces in the north that were pressing for the independence of a unified Sudan. Independence was granted on these terms in 1956 (Woodward 1990).

In the political competition that accompanied the period immediately after independence, the social, economic, and political backwardness of the south were laid bare. Many southerners came to feel that the benevolent, if neglectful, British colonial rule had been replaced by a tyrannical Arab and Muslim post-independence government, bent on Islamicization of the entire country (Viors 1995). Despite the fact that Muslim politicians proclaimed their commitment to the equality of rights of all Sudanese, for many southerners this commitment was not credible. Some of them reverted to the historical memory of the slave trade to explain why they mistrusted the intentions of the northerners. Such feelings were evident in the eruption of a mutiny among southern soldiers in August 1955. Fear and mistrust were diffused throughout the south. The mutiny marked the beginning of a seventeen-year-long civil war that only ended in 1972 following the mediatory efforts of Emperor Haile Selassie 1 of Ethiopia.

The uneasiness of what independence would mean for the southerners seemed to be justified by what occurred to them as soon as the independent government assumed power. Southerners became the victims of discrimination, intimidation, and disrespect in their dealings with northerners. It is important to note, however, that at this time no southern group claimed to be an historic nation with a right to self-determination. Also, although there was a diffusion of ethnic tensions in the south, conflict in the first civil war never became significantly transnationalized.

When the regime of General Gaafar Nimeiri assumed power in 1969 as the result of a military coup d'etat, one of its first priorities was the settlement of the civil war and the establishment of a sense of trust and cooperation in the south. Whereas successive northern-dominated governments had attempted to control the south in a hegemonic fashion, Nimeiri tried to allay the fears of the south by providing the region with a measure of governmental autonomy (Lake and Rothchild 1996a, 34–35). Another manner in which southern trust was culti-
A cease-fire and political settlement were brokered by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1992. Consequently, a formula was worked out for powersharing. However, because of differences of opinion within the Hutu leadership, the commitments of their negotiators at Arusha proved not to be credible. President Habyarimana was closely allied with Hutu militia hard-liners, and he did nothing to control their excesses.

The moderate Hutu leadership that agreed to the accord came to be perceived by Hutu hard-liners as traitors, and ethnic tensions after this point intensified, culminating in the assassination at the hands of Hutu militia of President Habyarimana in April 1994. Thus was unleashed a frenzy of genocide against the Tutsi by hard-line Hutus and Hutu civilians who got caught up in the hysteria and succumbed to the spell of their leaders, who systematically called upon them to purge the society of Tutsis. Some eight hundred thousand Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered in a brief three-month period. The weapons used to commit genocide in most cases amounted to nothing more than farm implements and traditional weapons.

In an effort to halt the carnage, the RPF resumed full-scale war against the Hutu militia and the Rwanda army, routing them and forcing millions of civilian Hutus to flee across the borders into Zaïre and Tanzania. The RPF now controls the country and is attempting to establish a government of national reconciliation, albeit under Tutsi hegemony. Yet for many Hutus in exile, this commitment is not credible not only because of past experiences but also because of the fear of vengeful retribution on the part of the Tutsis who would like to see those involved punished for their deeds.

In contrast to Rwanda, ethnic stratification in Burundi was less rigid, and Hutu-Tutsi ethnic conflict is more recent (Lemarchand 1994b). A mediating role was played in Burundian society by the institution of ganwa, the princely oligarchy. Princes could be of either ethnic group, but custom regarded them as ethnically distinct from either group. However, Belgian colonial rule, as in Rwanda, came to undermine the traditional system. The colonialists handed out ethnic identity cards and established a caste system very similar to that found in colonial Rwanda. The Tutsi came to be favored in all aspects of life.

There was peace in the aftermath of the war. Although some Hutus played a limited role in government, most were purged from power by subsequent regimes, both military and civilian. Some Hutus, inspired by the social revolution in Rwanda, attempted to push for their groups' rights in Burundi. At the same time, the Tutsi leadership in that country was determined not to suffer the fate of the Tutsi overlords in Rwanda. They feared that a Hutu-dominated government would systematically violate their rights as citizens. Burundian Hutus attempted revolts in 1965, 1972, 1988, and 1991, but they were brutally repressed.

After 1990, at the encouragement of France and other external patrons, Burundi's Tutsi leadership began to open up the political system. In 1992, the first multiparty constitution was introduced. Subsequently in national elections in June 1993, the first Hutu president of Burundi, Melchior Ndadaye, was elected. However, the military continued to be dominated by the Tutsi, and hard-liners in
Tutsi society, including the armed forces, refused to compromise. At the same time, Hutu extremists pushed for a rapid purging of Tutsi from positions of power. Ndadaye chose a gradualist strategy, utilizing a generous formula for including Tutsi in his government and another for integrating Hutus into the military officers' corps.

Ethnic tensions continued to be diffused until Ndadaye was assassinated in October 1993, and the Tutsi-dominated military seized power once again. In the aftermath of the coup, an estimated one hundred thousand people on both sides lost their lives. Both Hutu and Tutsi used rumor and myth to incite the killings and to justify extreme acts of ethnic violence. In contrast to the recent events in Rwanda, however, this outbreak of violence seems to have been spontaneous. As many as seven hundred thousand Burundians fled to neighboring countries, and more than a million others were displaced inside the country. Through the mediation of outside actors such as the UN and the OAU, Burundi was able to restore a fragile democracy by April 1994, under Hutu leadership. The OAU engaged in preventive diplomacy in an effort to head off the escalation of ethnic conflict, but this effort failed as a Tutsi-led military coup toppled the civilian government less than two years later.

Disjointed Ethnic Conflict in Liberia

Lake and Rothchild (p. 19) have noted that, "ethnicity often provides a key marker for self-aggrandizing politicians striving to build constituencies for attaining or maintaining political power" (also Saideman, Chapter Six). In some cases the ambitions of political entrepreneurs is what drives them to encourage ethnically based conflict. This is clearly represented in the Liberian civil war.

Although the military coup staged by Sergeant Samuel K. Doe, an ethnic Krahn, in 1980 against Americo-Liberian President Tolbert had ethnic undertones, the resulting conflict remained contained inside the country. The depth of ethnic tensions in Liberia did not become manifest until after a failed coup in 1985 (Fleischman 1993, 56). Doe believed that the coup was instigated by members of the Gio ethnic group, and he systematically began to persecute that group and their kin, the Mano. On December 24, 1989, a well-organized opposition force, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), invaded Liberia from the Côte d'Ivoire. It was headed by a former cabinet member in Doe's government, Charles Taylor, an ethnic Gio. The NPFL targeted Krahn and Mandingo (their ethnic kin) supporters of Doe. The Liberian opposition splintered in the early 1990s, and currently is composed of at least six ethnically based armed movements, the most significant of which are the NPFL of Taylor and the United Liberian Movement for Democracy, the latter of which has a Mandingo as well as a Krahn faction. The Armed Forces of Liberia is the remnant of the forces loyal to Doe.

The level of ethnic violence reached astounding proportions, prompting the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to establish in 1990 a peacekeeping force ECOMOG, or the ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (Vogt 1996; and Mortimer 1996). This five-nation force, led by Nigeria, was successful in at least containing the fighting by 1994, but because of the transnational nature of the situation and the lack of a unified opposition, peace has been difficult to achieve. The Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Guinea continue to support the NPFL, and the NPFL supports opposition forces in Sierra Leone. The support of various rebel forces by neighboring states has contributed greatly to the escalation and protraction of the conflict, despite the best efforts of external actors to make peace.

The conflict in Liberia has resulted in more than seven hundred fifty thousand Liberian refugees, and civil war and the destabilization activities of the NPFL have contributed to the creation of one hundred thousand refugees in neighboring Sierra Leone (Lyman 1991, 556). Until early 1996, the Liberian conflict had a diffusion effect on politics in Sierra Leone, where civil war also erupted.

The roots of the present conflict in Liberia, in contrast to those in Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, and Burundi are recent, and can be attributed mostly to elite political entrepreneurship that came to be pegged to ethnic affinity. In this circumstance, historical memory is less important than an immediate sense of relative deprivation or a sense of vengeful retribution based on personal grievances that are tied by ethnic entrepreneurship to recent ethnically based excesses against one's own group.

MANAGING TRANSNATIONAL ETHNIC CONFLICT IN AFRICA

Although transnationalized ethnic conflict is relatively rare in Africa today, there is increasing concern in the international community with finding mechanisms for the management of domestic conflicts that have the potential to spill over borders. History has shown that permanent solutions to such conflicts are nearly impossible; therefore, success is most likely in the prevention and management of deep and potentially violent ethnic conflict. Individual countries might engage in various strategies for internally eliminating or managing ethnic differences.

Conflict Elimination

The most common options available for the elimination of ethnic differences range from genocide to total assimilation (McGarr and O'Leary 1993a). The incidents of ethnic cleansing that were attempted in Rwanda in 1994 clearly could be considered genocidal. This option is almost impossible to implement effectively today because of the outcry it ultimately raises in the international community. Genocidal adventures today normally are halted before they can run their course.

The assimilation option is also difficult if not impossible in situations where integration is tantamount to the establishment of hegemonic control according to the cultural preference of the ruling ethnic group. Successive Sudanese governments, including the present one, have attempted this project but have failed precisely because the objects of assimilation are not willing to abandon their own cultures completely. All of the governments of modern Ethiopia, except the pre-
sent one, had tried and failed to assimilate disparate ethnic communities into a state with a common, if multiethnic, identity.

Another common option for eliminating ethnic differences that might become transnationalized would be partition or secession. This was attempted by the Ogaden Somali in 1977–1978; it is today a goal of some members of Ethiopia’s Oromo ethnic group, and it is now also being seriously considered by both sides in the Sudan conflict (Sudan Democratic Gazette 1995, 1).

**Conflict Management**

Methods for managing ethnic differences, as opposed to eliminating them, within a country vary from the strategies of national leaders to the intervention of external actors (G. Evans 1993, 9). Domestically, leaders might engage in policies of hegemonic control or transparent state-society relations. The objective of the second alternative is to build trust. Lake and Rothchild (Chapter Nine) identify four main trust-building options for national leaders: one, demonstration of respect for all groups and their cultures; two, formal or informal power sharing; three, elections according to rules that ensure either power sharing or the minimal representation of all ethnic groups in national politics; and four, federalism or regional autonomy.

African leaders are increasingly realizing that hegemonic control is not a wise long-term ethnic conflict-management strategy. Wherever this has been tried, it has failed. This point is amply made by the Ethiopian and Sudanese examples mentioned above.

As difficult as they are to achieve, trust-building approaches to managing ethnic conflict in Africa seem to hold the most promise. In almost all cases where national leaders adopt such approaches they are likely initially to be viewed with suspicion by groups who have previously felt insecure. However, through actions and policies that demonstrate the commitment of government to respecting all groups and cultures, confidence and trust can be engendered.

Power sharing is becoming increasingly popular in Africa, with the most recent experiments being in Burundi, Djibouti, and South Africa (Shezi 1995, 199). In each of these cases a conscious attempt was made to assure ethnic groups that they had group representation at the level of national government and some measure of regional autonomy. Confidence-building measures such as these are best seen as new ethnic contracts.

Rather than genuine power sharing, however, it is more common for political leaders in Africa to demonstrate only tentative commitment to power sharing, and to present only the appearance of attempting to form governments that are characterized by broad ethnic representation at the leadership level, and that give the indication of being concerned with social equity and the equal worth of all individuals and groups. In Ethiopia, for example, the new government has introduced a number of policies intended to show its respect for all of the country’s nationalities. The constitution calls for the creation of ethnically based states that possess considerable autonomy. At the same time, politics has been structured in such a way that the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front dominates at all levels. So progress toward trust-building must be measured in small degrees. Yet, it would appear that the regime recognizes its importance.

South Africa’s first all-race, multiparty elections were held in 1994, according to modified proportional representation rules. No one party was able to achieve an absolute plurality, and a few nonviable parties were canceled out (Reynolds 1994). Subsequent negotiations resulted in the sharing of executive power by the two strongest parties, the African National Congress and the National Party, and the appointment of the leaders of other parties who did well in the elections to significant cabinet posts. This seems to have been enough to engender wide confidence in South African society that the country’s leaders were committed to protecting the rights of all citizens, no matter what their race or ethnicity. Consequently, negotiation over a new social contract as represented in a permanent constitution proceeded with a minimum of serious conflict or ethnic racial tensions.

Federalism or regional autonomy are other approaches that can be used to build trust among groups that formally felt threatened. However, this approach is likely to fail unless leaders are willing to make credible commitments and to demonstrate consistently that they respect all citizens. Sudan unsuccessfully attempted a regional autonomy strategy. It was undermined by what proved to be a hegemonic project on the part of Islamic fundamentalists. Nigeria has been relatively more successful at making federalism work in the wake of the Biafran Civil War. Presently, Nigeria has thirty-one states. Federalism was chosen as a strategy in 1979, following the war, in an effort to avoid future severe ethno-regional conflict. Since then, there have been no further serious threats to the maintenance of Nigeria’s national boundaries.

No matter what strategy is chosen, success depends greatly upon the commitment of leadership. If leaders are not prone to compromise and to operate transparently, ethnic tensions are bound to reemerge. And in some cases the resulting tensions will turn into conflicts.

Increasingly some observers believe that preventive diplomacy should be employed to address both interstate and intrastate sources of conflict. The objective of such a strategy would be to head off conflicts through diplomacy before they erupt. This approach has two dimensions: early preventive diplomacy and late preventive diplomacy. Early preventive diplomacy involves good offices and skilled diplomacy as soon as tensions become apparent; and late preventive diplomacy involves efforts to persuade adversarial groups to desist when conflict appears to be imminent. A corollary to this approach would be the preventive deployment of peacekeeping troops in order to serve as a deterrent to conflict (G. Evans 1993, 39). To be most effective, such deployments should be robust, involving a sizable contingent of appropriately armed peacekeepers with clearly defined rules of engagement.

Once conflicts occur, preventive diplomacy and preventive deployment must give way to peace making. In such cases, arbitration and mediation on the part of third parties is called for. Such actors might be internal to the troubled country,
and represented by a person of high moral standing, or someone who appears to be neutral to the given conflict, or an individual with widespread charismatic appeal. However, with regard to the most intractable conflicts in Africa, the trend seems to be toward the intervention of external actors: individuals such as former Presidents Jimmy Carter or Archbishop Desmond Tutu and President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, government officials representing one or another major power; representatives of the UN, the OAU, or sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS and the Intergovernmental Agency for Drought and Development (IGAD). Under the auspices of the OAU, former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere provided good offices between 1995 and 1997 to stem the spread of the ethnic conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the controls exercised by the superpowers over regional clients in Africa have been removed, and the possibility of growing numbers of incidents of transnationalized ethnic conflicts is increasing. The realities of this situation have encouraged African leaders seriously to reconsider the norms of external intervention for the purpose of settling domestic disputes (Keller 1997). The UN, like the OAU, has historically supported the idea of the inviolability of the national boundaries of African states that existed at the time of independence. Consequently, it has been unwilling to become involved in adjudicating boundary disputes among neighboring states, and it has generally stayed out of mediating domestic conflicts. Until recently, the UN intervention in the Congo crisis in the early 1960s was the only incident in which the UN decided to commit troops in an effort to restore peace in Africa (Jackson 1982). At the time many observers seemed to believe that this action would serve notice that the UN would intervene anywhere in Africa where a communist threat was perceived. However, the Congo operation proved to be unique and was never repeated.

Despite its record in this area, in the 1990s the UN began to rethink the notion of state sovereignty and the norms of intervention in domestic disputes. This was prompted by Iraq's brutal repression of the Kurds in the aftermath of the Gulf War (Stremmel 1991). Also, civil war in Somalia catalyzed the UN into action first on humanitarian and then on political grounds. In the spring of 1992 the Organization committed peacekeeping troops to Somalia in an operation called United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) I. The primary motivation was humanitarian. The force was to clear the way for desperately needed food deliveries to an estimated 1.5 million Somalis threatened by war-induced famine. In late 1992 the Security Council authorized the deployment of a U.S.-led military force, UNOSOM II, to protect relief workers as they attempted to reach at-risk populations. Whereas the United States defined its role in strictly humanitarian terms, the UN envisioned a wider role for UN forces: to disarm the armies of local warlords and create an enabling environment for the restoration of a Somali national government. The latter objective proved to be a failure, as the UN was unable to make peace among warring leaders of ethnic factions or to build peace by creating an enabling environment for the return of civil government grounded in the trust of the general population.

The lessons of Somalia have forced the leaders of the international community to look more carefully at the possibility of regionally based approaches to the regulation of ethnic conflicts that either are or have a good possibility of spreading regionally. Following the UN's embarrassment in Somalia, its former negotiator in the conflict, Mohamed Sahnoun (1994, 54), asserted, "The UN headquarters must establish strong permanent and functional relationships with the regional organizations so that they can coordinate their response to specific needs in different regions of the world. The current system is not adapted to the post-Cold War international environment and routinely reacts to crisis through improvisation."

Apart from the failure of adversaries to make credible commitments in the course of third-party negotiations, much of the blame for failures in such efforts must be laid at the feet of the international community, which has always been reluctant to intervene either coercively or noncoercively in conflicts where they do not perceive their vital national interest to be at stake (Lake and Rothchild, Chapter Nine). Even when regional actors, despite lacking the resources to do so effectively, are willing to attempt to manage their own problems, the international community has historically been reluctant to provide support for regionally based interventions. This has particularly been so in the cases of African disputes.

The OAU has from time to time been willing to try and engage in peacekeeping in domestic conflicts that have become regionalized, but it has not had the wherewithal to do so effectively. Such was the case in the first major OAU peacekeeping effort in Chad in 1981-1982. It was underfinanced, and plagued by logistical problems.

The most successful inter-African peacekeeping effort to date has been that mounted by ECOMOG in 1991, with the objective of restoring peace and order in Liberia. After five years of peacekeeping, the West African units of ECOMOG were augmented by troops from Uganda and Tanzania. By August 1995, some semblance of order had been restored, and a government of national reconciliation had been agreed to by warring parties (Los Angeles Times, August 1993, p. A10).

Although it was founded to manage conflict among member states and to represent their interests in international forums, the OAU has played more of a reactive role in addressing threats to national and regional security, working through informal channels rather than through established mediation and conciliation institutions.

**Policy Challenges of Transnational Ethic Conflict in Africa**

African leaders have increasingly come to feel that the security, stability, and development of every African country affects every other African country, and Africa cannot hope to make progress toward development or democracy without creating the conditions and institutions necessary for lasting solutions to problems of security and instability. In this spirit, at the 1992 OAU Summit in Dakar,
Senegal, a resolution was passed calling for the establishment of an OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention and Resolution (Organization of African Unity 1993). The Mechanism was formally approved the following year, even though it was unclear as to how much authority it would have to intervene in the affairs of member states. Early indications are that the member states of the OAU have not adopted an attitude conducive to the establishment of Wilsonian multilateral collective security management system. In other words, it is not clear whether the notions of state sovereignty and the norms of intervention will indeed be altered in the process of implementing the Mechanism.

The primary objective of the Mechanism is said to be the "anticipation and prevention of conflicts." In situations in which conflicts have occurred, the Mechanism is supposed to be responsible for undertaking peacemaking and peace-building activities. In cases of severe conflict, there is a provision for OAU cooperation with the UN. Such was the case in late 1996, when African troops were committed to the humanitarian force organized under UN auspices to ensure the delivery of food and other relief supplies to Rwandan refugees in the war-torn Great Lakes region of Central Africa.

The obstacles to the successful implementation of the Mechanism are formidable. Chief among these is cost. Bilateral aid donors and the UN have made contributions, but many more resources are needed (Washington Office on Africa 1995). At its 1995 summit, the OAU made some tentative strides toward addressing some of its funding needs. First, the secretary general threatened to cut off speaking and voting rights for the leaders of countries behind in their dues, which resulted in the immediate infusion of some $20 million (Pretoria News 1995). Second, the leaders in attendance, demonstrating a firm commitment to the Mechanism, agreed to place their armed services on standby for possible intervention in increasingly unstable Burundi. These actions were preceded by the inauguration of the Cairo Center for African Crisis Solving, which hosted a one-month training course for twenty-eight military officers from fourteen African countries on conflict prevention and management. A similar center is planned for Harare, Zimbabwe. Eventually the OAU plans to create a continental "rapid deployment force." Troops would be drawn from standing national armies and trained and deployed from one of the two centers. The force would operate under the aegis of the UN (Agence France Presse 1995a).

At the root of the funding difficulties is the fact that, Africa is composed of fifty-three of the poorest countries in the world, many of which are characterized by unstable politics and food insecurity. Their militaries are small and they already spend too much on military purposes. How then will they afford over time to participate in the Mechanism? Who is to pay for the training and upkeep of the elite troops that a country must make available to the inter-Africa peacekeeping force?

Another pitfall has to do with state sovereignty and the norms of external intervention. Will the OAU in fact be able to assert its assigned authority when crises emerge? Will the Mechanism be obstructed by member states who have yet to buy into the new conceptualizations of state sovereignty and the norms of intervention? Although African leaders tend to agree that the Mechanism is needed, it is unclear what most would do if they were confronted with a situation in which the OAU Mechanism had been employed to resolve conflicts in their own country. Certainly such intervention would be more likely in smaller and weaker states (such as Burundi). But even then, the decision to intervene in any country will not be taken easily. For example, at its 1995 Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the OAU secretary general received widespread support from member states in attendance to make some of their troops available for peacekeeping duties in Burundi (Agence France Presse 1995b); however, low-intensity ethnic warfare has continued in Burundi, and the OAU has only committed military and civilian monitors to the country. The OAU might also feel more impelled to intervene in places where the state has completely collapsed (such as Somalia and Liberia), but peacemaking would be very difficult if not impossible when armed conflict is intense and the mutual mistrust of the adversaries is high. The OAU is least likely to contemplate direct intervention in larger and stronger states or where a state is highly unstable but still coherent (such as Sudan and Nigeria).

In cases of the most severe conflicts, the OAU continues to support subregional initiatives such as the peacekeeping efforts of ECOMOG in Liberia and the mediation of IGADD in the case of Sudan and Somalia. Such regional capacities, however, are still in their incipient phases, and fraught with all the problems attributed above to the new OAU mechanism. For example, the ECOMOG operation is very expensive and it is unclear how long the participating nations can continue to maintain a presence in Liberia. In Sudan, IGADD in 1995 tried to impose some conditions for negotiation on the government of Sudan, the IGADD Declaration of Principles (Legum 1995, 32). The Principles call for the right to self-determination for all Sudanese people up to and including secession, and the commitment to a separation of religion and the state. These principles have resulted in a stalemate in the mediation process, and in the meantime Sudan's relations with its neighbors (except for Kenya) have badly deteriorated.

What has become abundantly clear by the mixed results of the intervention of regional and international actors in efforts to bring peace to the most severe cases of ethnically and culturally based conflicts in Africa such as Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, and Rwanda is that constructing peace is a multifaceted process. It works best when such an intervention preempt the eruption of ethnically or culturally based conflicts in deeply divided societies.

External intervention would be most effective if it were indirect and represented in the material and logistical support of UN or regional efforts. Rich countries such as the United States, Britain, and France could make significant contributions through behind-the-scenes mediation and financial and technical assistance to regional peace initiatives.

In cases where conflict has erupted and spread regionally, the activities of outside actors cannot be confined to peacekeeping—that is, the containment of actual military activity on the part of ethnic adversaries. The further challenge is to develop effective political strategies for peacekeeping. Most often severe ethnic conflicts are inspired and promoted by leadership with their own personal agendas. Unless leaders declare that they are committed to peace, and are willing to
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Preventive Diplomacy and Ethnic Conflict: Possible, Difficult, Necessary

BRUCE W. JENTLESON

The basic logic of preventive diplomacy is unassailable. Act early to prevent disputes from escalating or problems from worsening. Reduce tensions that if intensified could lead to war. Deal with today’s conflicts before they become tomorrow’s crises. It is the same logic as preventive medicine: don’t wait until the cancer has spread or the arteries are nearly fully clogged; or as the auto mechanic says in a familiar television commercial as he holds an oil filter in one hand and points to a seized-up car engine with the other, “Pay me now or pay me later.”

Indeed, invocations of the need to expand and enhance the practice of preventive diplomacy have been heard from virtually all quarters of the post-Cold War world:

- from the outset of the Clinton administration, as in the emphasis by then-Secretary of State Warren Christopher in his 1993 confirmation hearings on the need for “a new diplomacy that can anticipate and prevent crises—rather than simply manage them”, the advocacy by then-National Security Advisor Anthony Lake for “greater emphasis on tools such as mediation and preventive diplomacy” so that “in addition to helping solve disputes, we also help prevent disputes”, and the assertion by AID Administrator J. Brian Atwood that whereas “containment of communism defined our national security policy for nearly half a century... the Clinton administration has made crisis prevention a central theme of its foreign policy” (Binder and Crossett 1993; Atwood 1994);
- from the United Nations, as in the January 1992 call by the UN Security Council, in its first-ever summit meeting at the level of heads of state and government, for “recommendations on ways of strengthening... the capacity of the United Nations for preventive diplomacy, for peacemaking and for peacekeeping,” and the ensuing report by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, An Agenda for Peace, which devoted a full chapter to preventive diplomacy (Boutros-Ghali 1992: 13–19);

Note: The author thanks Alexander George for his comments on an earlier draft. A version of this chapter appeared under the same title as University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC), Policy Paper No. 27, June 1996.

1 As a formal definition, Lund (1997) offers a useful though somewhat lengthy definition: actions, policies, and institutions used to keep particular states or organized groups within them from threatening or using organized violence, armed force, or related forms of coercion as the way to settle interstate or intergroup political disputes, especially where and when the existing means cannot peacefully manage the destabilizing effects of economic, social, political, and international change.