



SPECIAL REPORT

Future U.S. Engagement in Africa: Opportunities and Obstacles for Conflict Management

Report from a

United States Institute of Peace Symposium

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report, authored by Institute Program Officer Timothy D. Sisk, is a summary of discussion at a one-day United States Institute of Peace symposium held April 22, 1996. For further information, contact Timothy Sisk or David Smock, coordinator of the Institute's Africa activities. The views and recommendations presented in this report are those of symposium participants or the author's; the Institute does not adopt positions on policy issues.

Executive Summary

Africa's marginalization in U.S. foreign policy has increasingly become a reality; this disengagement by the United States from African affairs presumably weakens its interests as well as its ability to help prevent and end armed conflicts on the continent. The effect of this disengagement on the management of conflicts in Africa was the subject of a one-day symposium convened by the United States Institute of Peace on April 22, 1996. Twenty-five specialists on Africa — U.S. diplomats, scholars, and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — discussed the causes of and problems with U.S. disengagement, and prospects for future U.S. engagement, with a specific focus on situations in Nigeria, Sudan, Angola, Burundi, and Liberia. This report summarizes the discussion and outlines the principal participant recommendations that emanated from the symposium.

The Commitment Problem

- In virtually every conflict situation in Africa today, the credibility of the U.S. government's words and deeds is questioned. American diplomats are hamstrung by the U.S. domestic climate of disengagement, which has produced a decline in the attention given to these conflicts by senior officials and in the institutional and resource capabilities that would facilitate U.S. engagement.
- Overcoming declining U.S. credibility, analysts suggest, is not just a matter of reversing the disengagement trend, but is also a matter of devising innovative ways to deal with new types of problems that armed conflicts in Africa pose.
- Disengagement from Africa affects U.S. interests in a number of tangible ways. It undermines U.S. claims to global leadership, results in lost opportunities for trade and investment ties, may jeopardize access

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Africa has become increasingly marginalized in U.S. post-Cold War foreign policy.

U.S. diplomats with experience in Africa decry the "Mogadishu syndrome," which limits their ability to deal with actual or potential armed conflicts in Africa.

to critical strategic minerals, and inhibits the ability to stave off environmental disasters that can have global consequences. Moreover, the United States has a humanitarian interest in saving lives and preventing, or refusing to tolerate, genocide.

Engaging Recalcitrant States: Nigeria and Sudan

- The U.S. government's credibility problem is especially acute in dealing with ongoing or potential conflicts in states where the regimes are relatively powerful and wield considerable influence in their subregions or in Africa as a whole, such as Nigeria and Sudan.
- Many participants argued that it is critical for the United States, in pursuit of its own interests, to play a central role in helping bring Nigeria back into the international fold. Nigeria is far too significant a player in regional and international politics to be allowed to become an isolated and angry "rogue" state.
- Symposium participants were divided on how to best persuade the present military government in Nigeria to encourage meaningful democratic reform and stave off impending conflict. Some recommend a heavy sanctions policy, others favor pressured engagement, and still others advocate a selective engagement policy. Some observers questioned whether the current regime is reformable at all.
- Participants offered ideas on how to influence the Nigerian regime. These include focusing on Nigeria's need for debt relief, bolstering the democratic opposition, capitalizing on the desire for new direct foreign investment, engaging the country's rulers more directly through enhanced military-to-military exchanges, seizing the rulers' offshore assets, and considering the promotion of shared military-civilian rule for a transitional period.
- The problem in Sudan is similar to that in Nigeria in that this cornered, aggressive regime is resistant to most external pressures to reform. The situation in Sudan is further complicated by the fact that within the North and South the parties are factionalized and sometimes in violent conflict with one another.

Managing Complex Civil Wars: Burundi

- The principal challenge for U.S. policy in "failed" or failing states such as Somalia, Rwanda, and Burundi is how to provide an appropriate blend of incentives toward more peaceful interaction and disincentives toward violence.
- The challenge in Burundi is no longer one of early warning and preventive action — levels of violence are already high — but one of containing violence and preventing escalation to the point of genocide.
- In the absence of extensive official U.S. engagement and easily identifiable traditional levers of influence, NGOs and private diplomacy have helped fill the vacuum. Among the more important innovations are the Burundi Policy Forum and the "Great Lakes" initiative of former U.S. President Carter and former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere.

- In situations such as those in Rwanda and Burundi, dealing effectively with the injustices of the past is critical to breaking the culture of impunity that provides incentives for violence. Truth commissions and other transitional justice mechanisms such as international criminal tribunals can often have “demonstration” effects in neighboring states — that is, they show that severe human rights abuses may eventually lead to punishment.

Sustaining Attention to Peacebuilding: Liberia and Angola

- Even when peace agreements are reached, their implementation is by no means ensured. Liberia’s most recent strife, like Rwanda’s, is a case of the implementation of a peace agreement gone awry. There is an urgent need to renegotiate the Abuja agreement, Liberia’s most recent peace accord, and to solve the critical problem of warlordism.
- A critical current concern among policymakers is how to reconfigure the West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Military Observer Group) in such a way that it can contribute to stabilizing the situation in Liberia.
- Very close U.S. oversight in Angola has kept the pressure on the involved parties to live up to the terms of the 1994 peace agreement, particularly with regard to military integration and troop demobilization. The United States is therefore well placed to stimulate a national dialogue within Angola on its long-term future.

Coping in a Disengagement Environment

- There are ways for the United States to continue promoting conflict management in a disengagement environment: create trade and investment incentives for peace, back NGO and private peacemaking efforts, enhance cooperation with U.S. allies, and further strengthen African and regional conflict management capabilities.
- Participants widely agreed that policymakers should take a closer look at the actual and potential role of foreign (particularly U.S.) investors in promoting peace (or contributing to conflict) in Africa, and, relatedly, the role of international financial institutions in supporting conflict management as an element of structural adjustment and development programs.
- The future of U.S. engagement in Africa in promoting conflict management will increasingly depend on the ability of proponents of such engagement to clearly articulate not only U.S. interests in the continent, but also how various policies and tools aimed at conflict management can have a demonstrable impact on furthering those interests.

Analysts of Africa’s conflicts see a new trend in recent years — the development of “predatory warlordism.”

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Participants argued that it is critical for the United States, in pursuit of its own interests, to play a central role in helping to bring Nigeria back into the international fold. . . . [but] U.S. analysts and policymakers are divided on how best to persuade the present military government in Nigeria to encourage meaningful democratic reform and stave off impending conflict; some observers question whether the current regime is reformable at all.

Future U.S. Engagement in Africa: Opportunities and Obstacles for Conflict Management

Africa has become increasingly marginalized in U.S. post-Cold War foreign policy. Declining resources for engagement, such as development aid and diplomatic presence, coupled with a fatigue borne of the apparent intractability or complexity of conflicts in Africa, has led to a situation in which it is difficult for policymakers to engage meaningfully in preventing or ending armed conflicts. The failure of U.S.-led humanitarian intervention to restore long-term peace in Somalia has only reinforced trends of declining engagement. Even in states such as Liberia, which has strong historical ties to the U.S., the willingness of the world's only superpower to help bring serious armed conflict to an end has waned. U.S. military intervention to quell the fighting, urged by some but opposed by others, appears unlikely. Without the threat that each and every minor conflict could escalate into a nuclear exchange with the Soviets — a concern that drove engagement during the Cold War — the U.S. role in Africa has diminished measurably. U.S. engagement in complex conflicts and their humanitarian tragedies, such as in Liberia, has narrowed to simply evacuating foreign nationals when conditions approach anarchy.

Many analysts of Africa are alarmed because such U.S. disengagement is shortsighted and will have deleterious repercussions in years to come. When conflict management efforts are insufficient, small-scale crises have the potential to grow more serious and escalate into large-scale humanitarian tragedies that will eventually — and at a much higher cost — spur the United States into action, if only to alleviate civilian suffering through humanitarian intervention. Many observers note with concern that, since 1992, short-term humanitarian aid to Africa has been approximately double the amount of long-term development aid. Armed conflicts also cause ripple effects throughout subregions in Africa and frustrate the promotion of U.S. objectives in neighboring states. Moreover, opportunities for investment and trade are disrupted by armed conflict which then prohibits the development of commercial ties that could reinforce the overall rationale for more extensive engagement.

This environment of U.S. disengagement from helping manage conflicts in Africa was the subject of a one-day symposium convened by the United States Institute of Peace on April 22, 1996.¹ Twenty-five specialists on Africa — U.S. diplomats, scholars, and representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) — discussed the causes of, problems with, and prospects for future U.S. engagement in Africa, with a specific focus on Nigeria, Sudan, Angola, Burundi, and Liberia. The symposium was organized by David Smock, coordinator of the Institute's Africa activities, and chaired by Chester A. Crocker, chairman of the Institute's Board of Directors. This report summarizes the discussion and outlines the principal participant recommendations that emanated from the symposium. (The symposium was held on a not-for-attribution basis. Where quotations appear, the consent of the participant has been obtained.)

I. Background: The Commitment Problem

In virtually every conflict situation in Africa today, the credibility of the U.S. government's words and deeds is questioned. Those with whom the United States works to manage these conflicts, and the disputants them-

selves, perceive that American diplomats are hamstrung by the U.S. domestic climate of disengagement. U.S. diplomats with experience in Africa decry the fact that the “Mogadishu syndrome” seriously limits their ability to make credible policy commitments in dealing with actual or potential armed conflicts in Africa. This syndrome refers to the general lack of political will in the U.S. for engagement in Africa following the deaths of U.S. soldiers deployed in a United Nations-peacekeeping operation in Somalia in 1992.

Domestic political will for further engagement is undermined by the impression that armed conflicts in Africa are somehow different — more prone to happen, more complex and intractable, and less important — than those in other regions of the world. Chester Crocker, a former assistant secretary of state for African affairs, refutes that contention, arguing that “the only thing that’s really different about African conflicts is our general societal distance from them and ignorance of them. The mind-sets and double standards of our newspaper writers and editors at times . . . somehow downgrade African death and suffering in conflict situations. [This] seems to still be a habit in our society.”

Such inattention and ignorance is not lost in Africa. Political leaders and their rank and file in conflict situations clearly perceive the syndrome as well. Even when U.S. officials seek to engage and help solve a problem, there often is a lack of resources for them to reinforce this engagement. Thus, U.S. efforts to engage are not seen as credible or firm. Overcoming the commitment problem, analysts suggested, is not just a matter of reversing the disengagement trend, but is also a matter of devising innovative ways to deal with the new types of problems that armed conflicts in Africa pose and more cleverly coping with the pressures for disengagement.

The forces driving a search for innovative approaches are not limited to declining resources, but include shifting challenges as well. The ability of policymakers to influence what happens on the ground in conflict situations has changed. Analysts of Africa’s conflicts see a new trend in recent years — the development of “predatory warlordism.” Analysts refer to the powerful incentives for “political entrepreneurs” to start and sustain wars. These incentives are grounded in an intoxicating brew of lust for power and aggrandizement combined with the quest for personal enrichment and largesse. Although violent insurgencies or state actions are often cast in ethnic terms, armed struggles in Africa are only partly related to ethnic enmities. Chester Crocker noted that

We’re seeing common patterns. How do we deter, discourage, or check the men with the guns who have the initiative in Africa today? It is a shift in the basic incentive structure and the incentives, in all too many cases, are favoring people who would like to see a war break out or like to see one continue, but don’t want to see it end. People who would like to go into the insurgency business or to find some way to live off a conflict situation which, in a rather entrepreneurial way, they help to create or to keep going. . . . I see the basic fundamental conflict cause as predation.

The principal policy concern with regard to ending the war in Sudan, some analysts suggest, is how to mold the parties into a coherent shape so that a negotiated settlement is possible.

The key to resolving such conflicts is the internal situation, several participants argued: the U.S. needs to develop a better understanding of the internal politics in various conflict situations and of ways to reconfigure those politics in order to allow more moderate voices to ascend.

There is also a need for the United States to set clear standards for engaging with factional leaders.

The principal challenge for policy in such situations — situations characterized by persistently high political violence waged with low-tech but deadly weaponry, a proliferation of small arms, porous borders, and waves of refugees and displaced persons — is how to provide an appropriate blend of incentives toward more peaceful interaction and disincentives toward violence, and how to reconstitute a state that can maintain civility and order.

New challenges such as these, and the diminution of political will and resources, have provoked new thinking about the policies and tools U.S. policymakers can use to promote conflict management in Africa. Traditional levers of intervention to forestall or end violent conflict — diplomacy, aid, military intervention, multilateral peacekeeping — are sometimes inadequate to significantly affect the incentive structure of the conflicts. These types of intervention focus on states; states, however, are sometimes only one of the many players waging and perpetuating armed conflicts. In some situations (such as Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Burundi), what happens in the official institutions of government (such as a parliament) is but one aspect of the overall conflict dynamic. This problem was particularly acute in Somalia, where the state collapsed and factions based on clan and subclan identities sought control of turf for power-seeking and income-seeking aims. However, regimes remain important targets of intervention and influence.

II. Engaging Recalcitrant States: Nigeria and Sudan

The U.S. credibility problem is especially acute in relation to ongoing or potential conflicts in states where the regimes are relatively powerful and wield considerable influence in their subregions or in Africa as a whole. For example, there is every expectation that without some resolution of the current political impasses in Nigeria and Zaire, these states are headed for serious internal conflict that will most certainly undermine U.S. interests. How can the United States influence regionally powerful, recalcitrant regimes heading for, or engaged in, armed conflict?

Such states have cards to play because of their role in regional and broader international relations; the United States may seek to enlist them in pursuit of other objectives (such as the reliance on Nigeria to help manage tensions in Liberia) or simply to persuade them to desist from harmful actions against their neighbors (such as Sudan's fomenting of instability and terrorism in north and northeast Africa). As several participants noted, regionally influential states such as Nigeria, Zaire, or Sudan have the ability to "cause trouble" as a way to divert international attention from what are their own essentially internal conflicts. With regard to Sudan, for example, one participant remarked that "the degree to which the Sudanese scene has become complicated by the multiplicity of conflicts that have become intertwined and interconnected and by this interconnectedness, the profile of Sudan is raised. We have now raised the internal level to the regional level of conflict."

Many participants argued that it is critical for the United States, in pursuit of its own interests, to play a central role in helping bring Nigeria back into the international fold. Nigeria, historically the "giant" of Africa and a pivotal state in subregional and continental politics, is far too significant to be an isolated and angry rogue state. Nigeria's increasing isolation stems from the military's annulment of democratic elections in 1993 that were to have ushered in a new period of civilian rule: the putative winner of those elections, Mashood Abiola, is now under house arrest in what amounts to solitary confinement; prominent figures such as former president Olusegun Obasanjo are being detained; the independent press is being harassed; and widespread human rights abuses are occurring.

The potential for serious ethnic or religious conflict in Nigeria is acute. Some participants suggested that Nigeria is heading toward either another

civil war, or a creeping anarchy and dissolution of the state (a view, however, not shared by all). As James Woods, a former Department of Defense official, argued, "At the present time, Nigeria is . . . in a miserable condition, but is not in a state of imminent collapse, nor is it in a state of civil war." Nevertheless, without a resolution of the current impasse, Woods asserts that Nigeria's situation will continue to worsen.

The continuing crisis of democratization in Nigeria is especially worrisome because it has had a detrimental effect on movements toward democracy in neighboring states. Had Nigeria succeeded in moving again toward civilian rule (Nigeria has historically oscillated between military and civilian governments), efforts at introducing democracy elsewhere would have been reinforced; however, because the transition to democracy failed, similar developments elsewhere in the region have been set back. This "demonstration" or "diffusion" effect of events in regionally important states on neighboring states is an important consideration in U.S. policy toward Africa, affecting attitudes toward the best posture to take with reference to Nigeria and other regional powers (such as Kenya, Zaire, and Sudan).

U.S. analysts and policymakers are divided on how best to persuade the present military government in Nigeria to encourage meaningful democratic reform and stave off impending conflict. Some observers have questioned whether the current regime is reformable at all.

Some participants suggested that the United States should adopt a heavy sanctions policy toward Nigeria, imposing an embargo on Nigeria's oil exports (oil accounts for about 90 per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings) and enforcing it with an international naval blockade. Proponents of such heavy sanctions suggest that the current Nigerian regime is essentially corrupt and kleptocratic and is unlikely to give up power unless very severe consequences are imposed.

Others propose a strategy of pressured engagement, whereby a mix of carefully targeted sanctions are combined with incentives for reform — a blended "carrot and stick" approach. In essence, this pressured engagement approach characterizes current U.S. policy, through which some sanctions have been coupled with diplomatic persuasion to encourage reform. Some participants suggest that pressured engagement could be ratcheted up and that Nigeria's military rulers' assets in foreign bank accounts could be targeted and frozen. Others argue that current sanctions achieve very little, that additional sanctions would assuredly provoke a backlash, and that an embattled regime would be a very dangerous force in the region. These analysts instead advocate an incentives-based approach that would eschew a coercive posture — a selective engagement policy. Most participants at the symposium agree that the heavy sanctions approach is unlikely in the near term unless the Nigerian regime seriously missteps or conditions in that country demonstrably deteriorate.

Between the options of pressured engagement and selective engagement, participants offered several ideas on how to influence the behavior of the Nigerian regime and to move it away from catastrophe. These ideas — underlying principles for policy as opposed to specific policy recommendations — help illustrate how the United States could more meaningfully engage not only in Nigeria, but in other strong, recalcitrant states as well. One avenue for influence suggested is to focus on Nigeria's need for debt relief. "Nigeria

Some participants believe that the creation of an international donor coalition to pool resources and harmonize policies is an important first step.

is in dire need of debt relief and rescheduling at the Paris Club," one participant argued. U.S. policy should emphasize conditions to debt relief and reciprocal agreements linking debt relief to a specific reform program.

Another suggestion is to bolster the "better half" of a country's political reputation. Nigeria, ironically, has developed widely respected blueprints for political institutions (such as the structure of federalism and the electoral system) that could serve as models for conflict management in other societies deeply divided by ethnicity and religion — if they could ever be fully implemented. Placing emphasis on Nigeria's potential as a role model could induce the regime to open avenues for democratic development. Thus the United States should seek to bolster the currently embattled democratic opposition and civil society. Woods, for example, suggested that the best option at this point is for the United States to work with the regime and its opposition to "open political space" for democrats so that when a return to civilian rule approaches (the regime has promised a three-year transition), an enabling environment for democracy will have been created. For the first time in Nigerian history, the democratic opposition to military rule is calling for international intervention. Failure to engage and support such opposition, some participants argued, undermines the opposition's ability to function in the longer term.

Several participants suggested that to gain influence the United States should focus on those things a regime's rulers really want. What does the ruling clique of high-ranking officers in Nigeria want? Watchers of Nigeria suggest that the military government is keen to stimulate new direct foreign investment, and that this is an important lever for U.S. policy. Participants who favor a selective engagement approach suggest gradually lifting existing sanctions as the regime's human rights performance improves, with encouragement of new direct investment as an incentive. Others suggest that the junta's motivations are primarily personal — security and wealth — and that U.S. policy should be predicated on that assumption.

Similarly, the United States could focus on the Nigerian military and provide incentives for the resurrection of its international acceptance. In the past, international acknowledgment of their professionalism has been highly valued by Nigeria's armed forces, and Nigerian participation in U.S. military exchange programs has been seen as an important aspect of bilateral ties. More recently, U.S.-Nigerian military exchanges have been curtailed, and current ties are at a very low level. The absence of contact also provides little opportunity for insights into the current situation within the military. Some participants stated their belief that improved military-to-military relations could be an important carrot to induce the current regime to reform. Similarly, continued and even enhanced Nigerian participation in international peacekeeping could improve the military's image at home, thereby encouraging the government to adopt more internationally acceptable behavior.

The differences between a pressured engagement and selective engagement approach to resistant states such as Nigeria are a matter of degree. Should the focus be on punitive sanctions or inducements to change? In such debates, much rests on policymakers' core assessment of the regime, particularly its vulnerabilities and its responsiveness to different types of pressure. In the case of Nigeria, many analysts prefer a "soft landing" to the present

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impasse — with some suggesting a period of military-civilian dyarchy, or shared rule. Yet what mix of measures can achieve a soft landing for Nigeria is still very much open to debate. Virtually all participants agreed that a premium should be placed on information and analysis of the internal dynamics of the current regime, particularly the machinations within the close cadre of military rulers.

The need for a better understanding of the internal dynamics of recalcitrant regimes is echoed by analysts of the prolonged war in Sudan. The problem in Sudan is similar to that in Nigeria in that this cornered, aggressive regime is resistant to most external pressures to reform. The situation in Sudan is further complicated by the divided factions in the North and the South, which complicates any negotiations to end the conflict and confounds outsiders' ability to understand the internal dynamics of the situation. As with the situation in Nigeria, analysts question whether the regime in the North is reformable. As Francis Deng, of the Brookings Institution, suggested, "I don't see how they can compromise their Islamic agenda enough to win the South." Yet, he argued, the regime cannot be disregarded as a potential party to ending the conflict because it holds power.

The United States is motivated to attempt to end the war in Sudan for many reasons. In the past, it was the humanitarian tragedy in Sudan that drove attention to the problem; today, the problem of international terrorism from an isolated regime provides an additional (some would say primary) impetus for engagement, especially since the assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 1995.

The principal policy concern with regard to ending the war in Sudan, some analysts suggest, is how to mold the parties into a more coherent shape so that a negotiated settlement is possible. One option is to encourage the northern parties to agree on a common agenda and then ascertain whether this common position is acceptable to the South. Analysts suggest that clarifying the extent to which northern Sudanese are willing or able to abandon their Islamic agenda for all of Sudan will clarify policy options for outsiders. If those in power in the North are not "reformable," the basic premises of U.S. policy toward Sudan — that it should remain unified — should change; the time for a "harmonious, amicable divorce," or partition, in Sudan will have come. Short of that last resort option, participants suggested some ways in which conflict management in Sudan can be promoted within the framework of unity.

Some participants said the U.S. should seek ways to thwart the strategic ambitions of extremist leaders or factions. If the aim of the Sudanese government is to promote an internal civil war in the South by dividing southern factions (as some analysts have suggested), what can be done to thwart such a strategy? U.S. policy could be oriented to provide incentives for southern factions to coalesce. John Prendergast, of the Center of Concern, argued that "southern unity is a prerequisite for any kind of just solution because it is going to require a very potent military element in forcing a just solution." Some participants suggest that military aid, development assistance,² and diplomatic persuasion might be used to promote unity in the south with the aim of developing a North-South balance of power more conducive to a negotiated settlement. Given the very late stage of conflict in Sudan, following a

In the absence of extensive U.S. engagement and easily identifiable traditional levers of influence, NGOs and private diplomacy have helped fill the void, often with the encouragement of officials and with Agency for International Development funds.

In many ways private diplomacy is as important, if not more important, than official diplomacy with regard to current efforts to contain and reduce violence in Burundi. . . . Participants also agreed that when the United States is not likely to take the lead in a major peacemaking effort, the government should support private peacemaking initiatives such as the Nyerere/ Carter activity on Central Africa and the Burundi Policy Forum.

failed (1972) peace pact and more than a decade of renewed civil war, some propose that U.S. policy should be more bold, going so far as to encourage the southern factions to announce a unilateral declaration of independence and then recognizing the secessionist state. The northern regime is simply not reformable, these analysts argued.

Assuming that such a bold move is unlikely in the near term, what avenues are open for U.S. engagement? The key to resolving such conflicts is the internal situation, several participants argued: the U.S. needs to develop a better understanding of the internal politics in various conflict situations and of ways to reconfigure those politics in order to allow more moderate voices to ascend. For example, some suggest that the problem of international terrorism in Sudan is inherently related to the internal situation. As Francis Deng noted, "If you deal with terrorism as an external manifestation and forget the roots of that terrorism, you're not solving anything."

Some participants suggest that the United States work closely with Sudan's neighbors, giving them the support necessary to bring about the kind of military parity crucial to a negotiated settlement. Peacemaking in Sudan has become more complicated since the regional peacemaking effort through the northeast African subregional organization the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has been stymied. Neighboring states such as Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda have developed a more confrontational stance with the Sudanese regime. Some participants propose that these regional states should be empowered and assisted in righting the military balance — a prerequisite, these analysts argue, to a change in posture by the Sudanese regime.

There is also a need for the United States to set clear standards for engaging with factional leaders. Some participants suggest that the key to U.S. policy in Sudan is to strengthen southern factions, particularly the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) under John Garang. Yet Garang is hardly a democrat, participants contended, and steps should be taken to condition support on adherence to global human rights standards. "Identify what ought to be done if he is to earn the legitimacy of international recognition as a leader," one participant suggested.

III. Managing Complex Civil Wars: Burundi

In Somalia, Burundi, and Rwanda, policymakers face difficulty in devising strategies for meaningful engagement because the situations are especially complex — the parties are largely factionalized, levers of influence are minimal or nontraditional, and forging a coherent peacemaking strategy is difficult because of the relative unimportance of the country to traditionally defined U.S. interests. Yet, the humanitarian consequences of unchecked conflict draw the international community, and the United States, into a peacemaking role.

The principal challenge for policy in such situations — situations characterized by persistently high political violence waged with low-tech but deadly weaponry, a proliferation of small arms, porous borders, and waves of refugees and displaced persons — is how to provide an appropriate blend of incentives toward more peaceful interaction and disincentives toward violence, and how to reconstitute a state that can maintain civility and order.

How can moderates emerge in such multipolarized situations?

Policymakers are especially attuned to the current conflict in Burundi, for example, not because this country is geostrategically important or because the United States has significant actual or potential commercial interests, but because they fear that the conflict will degenerate into genocide just as it did in neighboring Rwanda in 1994. The issue in Burundi is no longer one of early warning and preventive action — levels of violence are already high — but one of containing violence and preventing escalation to the point of genocide. The situation in Burundi reflects U.S. concerns about many states in Africa after the Cold War. As John Stremmler, of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, asserted, “We don’t care who governs Burundi, but we care how that governance is determined.”

The options for extensive official U.S. engagement in Burundi appear limited. External parties, including the United States, are focused on facilitating a national debate to arrive at the terms for mutually acceptable coexistence. How this can be achieved is the subject of intense head scratching on the part of analysts and policymakers. Fostering a constructive national debate must involve strategies that allow moderate forces to ascend and have influence in this highly volatile and ethnically polarized atmosphere.

The practical experience with policy formulation toward a marginal, but potentially very important, conflict such as that in Burundi offers some insights about engagement in similarly complex conflicts elsewhere. Some participants believe that the creation of an international donor coalition to pool resources and harmonize policies is an important first step. A carefully crafted aid package could be structured to provide material rewards for parties and politicians who advocate moderation and interethnic toleration and to effectively penalize those who are immoderate. Assistance packages do not need to be especially expensive in a country like Burundi because in such conditions of poverty, a little external assistance goes a long way.

The critical question is how to operationalize such an aid package and ascertain how its structure and implementation might work for or against conflict amelioration. For example, it was noted that a rural-based policy will inevitably benefit the Hutus disproportionately, whereas an urban-based package would favor the Tutsis. Another option considered was to use targeted sanctions against extremists in both camps who might have overseas assets that could be frozen or seized; some participants believe that political leaders have amassed considerable fortunes that are being held in foreign bank accounts.

Advocates of measures such as these suggest that U.S. policy should be clearly targeted toward achieving a more equitable balance of power so that negotiation becomes an attractive alternative to violence. As Stremmler expressed it, “Foreign policy increasingly is not about the balance of power among countries, but within countries, that is, it is about civics and power-sharing agreements.” With that comment in mind, some participants suggested that providing information on power-sharing options to Burundians is a feasible option that could allow political leaders there to renegotiate the current Convention of Government (a power-sharing pact, albeit an unstable one). One of the apparent problems with this approach is that the political parties in Burundi, such as the Hutu-led FORDEBU (Front Démocratique du Burundi) and the Tutsi-dominated UPRONA (Union pour le Progres National), have been marginalized and that the real base of power is outside

In conflicts, such as Rwanda and Burundi, dealing effectively with the injustices of the past is critical to breaking the culture of impunity that provides incentives for violence. Transitional justice is a matter of striking the balance between accountability and the local realities with regard to those who have power.

Even when peace agreements are reached, their implementation is by no means ensured.

Power sharing (probably the only realistic short-term scenario for reconstituting a Liberian state) is problematic because it gives incentives for warlords to "spoil" the process if they are not included in the settlement and incentives for current groups to further factionalize. Without a sense of how to create a sustained dialogue on Liberia's identity and structure as a state, any peace pact is likely to be short lived.

their grip; effective power lies within factions of the Tutsi-led military and the Hutu militia groups. One Burundian analyst suggested that "even if you reach an agreement or understanding among those political [party] groupings, it doesn't guarantee that you're going to have peace and stability in Burundi."

In the absence of extensive U.S. engagement and easily identifiable traditional levers of influence, NGOs and private diplomacy have helped fill the void, often with the encouragement of officials and with Agency for International Development funds. Among the more important policymaking innovations is the Burundi Policy Forum, established by a consortium of NGOs (the Council on Foreign Relations' Preventive Action Program, Refugees International, Search for Common Ground, and the African-American Institute) and supported financially by the United States Institute of Peace. The forum is a series of regular meetings bringing NGOs working on humanitarian relief, development, human rights, and conflict management issues together with scholars, U.S. officials, and occasionally officials from international organizations. The purpose of the meetings is information sharing and coordination. The institutionalized nexus between NGOs and officials is widely perceived by analysts as a mechanism worth replicating in other conflict situations.

Private diplomacy is in many ways as important, if not more important, than official diplomacy with regard to current efforts to contain and reduce violence in Burundi. The Carter Center, under the direction of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, has teamed up with former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, former Malian President Amadou Touré, and South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu to lead current peacemaking efforts. The team produced an extraordinary summit of regional heads of state in Tunis, Tunisia, in March 1996 that has stimulated efforts to find a regional solution to conflicts in both Burundi and neighboring Rwanda. The initiative is premised on the understanding that a solution to the problems of civil conflict in Central Africa — especially the conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi and their spillover effects in Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire — requires a regional approach.

This private diplomatic initiative is expected to be handed off at some point to more conventional diplomacy (probably the Organization of African Unity [OAU], and its Mechanism on Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution), but how this will occur has not yet been determined. In the meantime, analysts suggested that the situation in Burundi could be improved if — in the absence of United Nations-led military intervention, which seems to be (temporarily, at least) off the table — the international community would send more human rights monitors and organize a concentrated effort to strengthen local legal systems, train police, and deal with the problem of internally displaced persons.

In many conflict situations, such as Rwanda and Burundi, dealing effectively with the injustices of the past is critical to breaking the culture of impunity that provides incentives for violence. Transitional justice is a matter of striking the balance between accountability and the local realities with regard to those who have power. The international community has learned much in recent years about transitional justice, and much of that learning has come from experience in Africa. One of the most important lessons is how to strike

a balance between accountability and conflict resolution. Neil Kritz, director of the Rule of Law initiative at the United States Institute of Peace, argued that prosecution of war crimes and other atrocities can reduce the tendency toward collective blame and collective guilt by demonstrating "that entire ethnic groups, entire religious groups, are not going to be indicted and held accountable for what has happened in the past, but specific individuals, in fact, have committed crimes and abuses. Those individuals can be dealt with and, implicitly, everyone else from their ethnic group is in the category for reconciliation."

Another suggestion for transitional justice includes innovative uses of amnesty. Kritz suggests that amnesty might be granted only after an individual has come forward and confessed to specific crimes and provided all the relevant information about the injustice (as is the case with South Africa's current Truth and Reconciliation Commission). Compensating victims can also foster reconciliation by engendering a sense that justice has been served. Truth commissions and other transitional justice mechanisms such as international criminal tribunals can often have an impact beyond borders. There is a widespread belief, for example, that if the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda is successful, it may have a salutary impact on events in Burundi, where perpetrators of violence may think twice about the potential for future punishment for their behavior. The United States and the international community have learned much in recent years on issues of transitional justice, and this experience should be mined for future applications in Africa.

IV. Sustaining Attention to Peacebuilding: Liberia and Angola

Even when peace agreements are reached, their implementation is by no means ensured. Many observers of Africa point to the fact that after a reasonably good settlement was agreed upon for Rwanda (the 1993 Arusha Accords), insufficient international attention to implementation of that agreement created an environment in which the 1994 genocide became possible. Participants discussed what new peace accord implementation, or peacebuilding, issues the United States could address and what new roles are possible in demobilizing and disarming combatants, constitutional development, transitional justice, economic policy in relation to peace, and postconflict rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The situation in Liberia was discussed in such terms. Liberia's most recent strife, like Rwanda's, is a case of the implementation of a peace agreement gone awry. The recent anarchy in the streets of Monrovia reflects, as Kevin George of the Friends of Liberia argues, "the symptomatic atrophy of the entire Abuja peace process, the dying on the vine of that process through neglect, lack of good faith, lack of resources." The recent reemergence of "predatory warlordism" was facilitated by a lack of international engagement and support for the peace process, especially the demobilization component. "If that failed, everything else failed," George remarked. The August 1995 Abuja agreement that brought Liberia's five-year civil war to an end failed to include a realizable process for encampment of the armed factions. In addition, insufficient resources were provided to the West African (ECOMOG) and UN peacekeeping forces (UNAMIL). Furthermore, international coordination of the peace process is inadequate, some participants noted.

Current U.S. engagement in Angola is in part a function of learning from past mistakes.

Watchers of Angola suggest that international support should be provided to domestic NGOs in Angola to organize programs for reconciliation and healing, as well as to provide relief and development assistance.

In looking to the future, the options for restarting the Liberian peace process are related to the cause of its breakdown. The most urgent need is to renegotiate the Abuja agreement and solve the critical problem of warlordism and in particular which factional leaders should be included — and perhaps more important, which ones should be excluded — in the power-sharing government. In this respect, emphasis on power sharing (probably the only realistic short-term scenario for reconstituting a Liberian state) is problematic because it gives incentives for warlords to “spoil” the process if they are not included in the settlement and incentives for current groups to further factionalize. Yet, if such leaders are included in a power-sharing pact, their legitimacy as political leaders is affirmed and reinforced by the international community.

A second set of concerns relates to the West African regional peacekeeping force, ECOMOG. Although there was considerable enthusiasm about ECOMOG when it was first deployed in Liberia in 1993, the attitudes of some analysts toward the force have changed in recent years. Some participants suggest that ECOMOG has become just another party to the conflict in Liberia, even prolonging efforts at conflict management, whereas others see it as a still-viable peacekeeping and even peace enforcement operation. Detractors of ECOMOG point to the fact that some elements of the peacekeeping force were allegedly engaged in looting during the recent violence and backed some of the warlords against the others. Nevertheless, the United States has supported ECOMOG diplomatically and financially, recently releasing an additional \$30 million in support of its operations.

A critical, current concern among policymakers is how to reconfigure ECOMOG in such a way that it can contribute to stabilizing the situation in Liberia so that peacemaking, and eventually peacebuilding, efforts can get back on track. Some suggest that ECOMOG, which is dominated by Nigeria, can never be a viable neutral force and that U.S. military intervention is the only way to stabilize Liberia and create the environment for a renegotiation of the Abuja agreement. Others suggest that ECOMOG is the only viable option and that U.S. efforts should be geared toward improving its operations and professionalism.

For the long term, participants were concerned that although the Abuja process set up a solution for the short term by creating a government of national unity, insufficient attention is being paid to the longer term process of normalizing politics in Liberia. Without a sense of how to create a sustained dialogue on Liberia's identity and structure as a state, any peace pact is likely to be short lived. Some believe that the United States is especially well suited to stimulate such a dialogue, in part because of its experience as a multiethnic democracy and the durability of its democratic political institutions.

The implementation of peace accords in Angola faces somewhat similar problems. Unlike many of the cases considered at the symposium, the United States is heavily engaged in implementing the peace agreement in Angola. David Smock, coordinator of Africa programs at the U.S. Institute of Peace, noted that “major U.S. support is being given for the UNAVEM III (United Nations Verification Mission in Angola) peacekeeping operation. Very significant American sums have been allocated for humanitarian assistance. Paul

Hare, a special envoy, and Ambassador Donald Steinberg and his staff are intimately involved in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol [Angola's peace agreement]."³

By all accounts, current U.S. engagement in Angola is in part a function of learning from past mistakes; the last attempt at peacebuilding in Angola in 1992 (implementing the Bicesse Accord) ended in failure when the former U.S. client UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), led by Jonas Savimbi, refused to accede to the results of the November 1992 elections and returned to the battlefield until the current peace agreement, the Lusaka Protocol, was clinched in 1994. Since then, very close U.S. oversight and the "carrot and stick" approach has kept the pressure on the parties to live up to the terms of the agreement.

In addition to constant attention to the pressing short-term issues of implementation — such as encampment of soldiers, demobilization, and disarmament, which receive very close, daily attention from U.S. diplomats — participants suggested a need to focus on several issues that will be decisive for longer term peacebuilding in Angola. One of the most important tasks, as in Liberia, is to determine what lies beyond the power-sharing formula arrived at in the Lusaka Protocol. Participants noted that the current political institutions are a holdover from the centralized Marxist state that was Angola in the immediate post-independence era (beginning in 1975). There is no vision of the long-term political institutions that can serve Angola into the indefinite future and what the process of constitutional change would look like.

Some participants suggested that the United States could encourage and seek to facilitate a longer term discussion of constitutional reform in Angola. Such a discussion would support emergence of a more stable form of democratic institutions that will avoid a rerun of the problem of the November 1992 elections, in which a majoritarian electoral system led to a face-off between the two main political antagonists (Savimbi and current president Jose dos Santos). Participants recommend that the United States stimulate the creation of a national, multiparty constitutional convention to allow for negotiations by Angolans on the future structure and nature of their country — analogous to the need to stimulate a national debate in Burundi. The model of the multiparty talks on a postapartheid constitution in South Africa is one with potential relevance to Angola, some participants suggested.

Participants also recommend that such a national dialogue be extended to economic issues, noting that both the Angolan government and UNITA have control over the country's natural resources in a manner that prevents the national economy from being used as a mechanism for integration and peacebuilding. The government controls the country's oil exploitation and derives the lion's share of its revenues from crude oil exports, whereas UNITA has control over much of the lucrative diamond trade. Not only does such bifurcated control of the country's economic bounty mean that the state has, in effect, no ability to coherently manage the economy, but it also gives the parties exclusive sources of revenue — a disincentive to sharing the economic wealth with each other or engaging in collective problem solving.

As in other settings, such as Burundi, there is an increasing reliance in Angola on international NGOs as a means of engagement. Watchers of Angola suggest that international support should be provided to domestic NGOs in

The four major themes that emerged from the discussion were creating economic incentives for peace; backing NGO and private peacemaking efforts; enhancing cooperation with U.S. allies; and strengthening African and regional conflict management capabilities.

Participants agreed that policymakers should take a closer look at the actual and potential role of how foreign (particularly U.S.) investors promote peace (or contribute to conflict) in African environments, and relatedly, the role of international financial institutions in supporting conflict management as an element of structural adjustment and development programs.

Angola to organize programs for reconciliation and healing, as well as to provide relief and development assistance.⁴ Such support, it is argued, would also enhance the development of a civil society that could buttress the chances of successful democratization over the long term. However, even those participants who support providing assistance to Angolan NGOs acknowledge that there are problems with this approach: it is difficult to determine which NGOs are capable of delivering services and conducting reconciliation programs efficiently and effectively; NGOs pose a threat to the respective political establishments; and such assistance to NGOs would help supplant the state's public welfare duties, removing the "organic" links between authorities and their constituencies.

Others participants pointed to the urgent task of helping transform UNITA from a fighting force to a political organization, and recommend that the United States (UNITA's erstwhile patron during the Cold War) is well placed to facilitate that transformation. Several participants argued that U.S. business and trade interests need to be brought into the equation as a force for peace, and that officials should place more emphasis on the potentially more influential roles of U.S. commercial ties in peacebuilding efforts.

V. Coping in a Disengagement Environment

U.S. diplomats engaged in policy formulation and implementation in Africa increasingly say that the U.S. government resources for intervention, peacekeeping, training, supporting transitional justice programs, and supporting NGOs simply aren't there. Although there is much these diplomats would like to do, and could do, to help manage Africa's conflicts and further U.S. interests, the lack of political will at home to provide resources and the lack of public support for engagement undermines their ability to act. As suggested above, however, there are ways for the United States to continue promoting conflict management in such a disengagement environment. Four themes emerged from the discussion that transcended the specific cases deliberated at the symposium: creating economic incentives for peace, backing NGO and private peacemaking efforts, enhancing cooperation with U.S. allies, and further strengthening African and regional conflict management capabilities.

Participants widely agreed that policymakers should take a closer look at the actual and potential role of foreign (particularly U.S.) investors in promoting peace (or contributing to conflict) in African environments, and, relatedly, the role of international financial institutions in supporting conflict management as an element of structural adjustment and development programs. There was a broad consensus that better coordination among mediators, peacekeepers, donors, and current or potential foreign investors could provide "focused leverage," in the words of one participant. With regard to the international financial institutions, for example, one participant noted that "they can't afford to put their investments at risk by having everything destroyed in a civil conflict," yet they seem to be insufficiently involved in peacemaking and peace implementation efforts. These ideas also suggest that the United States has a special role to play in economic policy in relation to peace and reconstruction because of its clout in international financial institutions; its strong, export-oriented commercial sector; and its recent focus on devel-

oping emerging market economies.

Similarly, the U.S. commercial community was referred to as the “sleeping giant” that neither the U.S. government nor dedicated U.S. NGOs have cultivated in a way that would bring the potential influence of business interests to bear in African policymaking for conflict management. Enlisting the business community not only would give the United States greater influence in managing conflict, but would also help further build a constituency for Africa within the United States — a prerequisite for generating domestic support for renewed engagement.

Participants also generally agreed that when the United States is not likely to take the lead in a major peacemaking effort, it should support private peacemaking initiatives such as the Nyerere/Carter activity on Central Africa and the Burundi Policy Forum. These initiatives are a “new level of diplomacy” as one participant argued, a peculiar outcome of post-Cold War disengagement in Africa. “If former President Carter and former President Nyerere are going to it,” one participant added, “let’s make sure they are able to link up with U.S. policymakers” and with those such as the OAU who may be tasked to implement any agreements.

Reliance on NGOs for U.S. engagement in Africa is likely to increase, not just for on-the-ground implementation of policies (for example, provision of relief or aid) but in helping officials formulate policy as well. For example, as James Bishop noted, “In the absence of anything appearing to be an administration strategy in Liberia, the Friends of Liberia [an NGO] has articulated a program which covers a gambit from military to humanitarian interventions.” Moreover, Bishop added, the administration adopted much of the Friends’ agenda. Similar to involving the commercial community in policy, one participant asserted, NGOs are important not only because they offer early warnings of impending conflict or assist in unofficial implementation of policies, but because they can serve as bridges in the field. They can rebuild a domestic constituency for Africa in this country.”

When U.S. military forces are engaged, new and path-breaking cooperation between the military and NGOs should be strengthened, participants suggested. One of the outcomes of the U.S. military intervention in Somalia was the increasing interaction and cooperation between the U.S. military and relief, development, and conflict management NGOs. Such bureaucratic linkages are important, several participants argued, and are one of the more positive developments in the disengagement environment. Similarly, the United Nations is increasingly working hand-in-glove with NGOs to promote conflict management. In Zaire, for example, NGOs have taken the lead in helping the United Nations develop a coherent preventive action agenda to keep forthcoming elections in that country from becoming a spark for armed conflict and not a mechanism to reconstitute a broadly legitimate government.

In many instances, participants noted, the lack of a cohesive response on the part of Western states undermines U.S. conflict management objectives in Africa. Policy coordination with France was singled out as especially important with respect to West and Central Africa, where the French are former colonizers and retain extensive influence and a commercial presence. In some cases, inter-ally coordination works. For example, U.S. dip-

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Within the environment of disengagement in Africa, participants argued that the United States should redouble its efforts to strengthen regional and subregional institutions and peacemaking capabilities. Western efforts to help Africans develop a more systematic and institutionalized conflict management capability can be improved.

The question is not whether the United States should be engaged in African conflict management, but how it can best be done in an era of U.S. fiscal belt-tightening and diminishing domestic political will for this kind of involvement.

diplomats worked through Portugal and Angola to help reverse a recent coup attempt in Sao Tome and Principe. In other cases, such as Liberia and Rwanda, allied actions seem to work at cross-purposes. Although there is ongoing, practical policy coordination among Western states — and particularly among donor groups — participants recommend that such coordination should be improved and diplomatic contacts regularized, deepened to operational-level diplomats, and made more consistent.

Within the environment of disengagement, the United States should redouble its efforts to strengthen regional and subregional institutions and peacemaking capabilities in Africa, participants argued. Western efforts to help Africans develop a more systematic and institutionalized conflict management capability can be improved. There are things that the United States alone can do to stimulate this development. Participants noted that some promising unilateral actions have been taken (for example, posting a U.S. diplomat to the OAU with the principal task of working with the Mechanism on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution). Participants suggested that the United States can do more to further bolster the mechanism — in particular, helping it become more operational with observation capabilities, vehicles and communications equipment, and helping develop rules of engagement. Subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), IGAD, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) can be further supported in their newfound peacemaking and peacekeeping roles.

The future of U.S. engagement in Africa in promoting conflict management will increasingly depend on the ability of proponents of such an engagement to clearly articulate not only U.S. interests in the continent, but also how various policies and tools can have a clearly demonstrable impact in furthering those interests. Despite even the most difficult of cases with which the United States is currently engaged, including those considered at the symposium, it is clear to participants that even in an environment of disengagement, U.S. leadership in conflict management efforts remains critical to advancing the national interest. What is changing is not whether the United States should be engaged in African conflict management, but how it can best be done in an era of U.S. fiscal belt-tightening and diminishing domestic political will for this kind of involvement.

Endnotes

¹ Smock and Chester A. Crocker, eds., *African Conflict Resolution: The U.S. Role in Peacemaking*, (Washington, D.C.: USIP Press, 1995).

² See David R. Smock, "Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict in Africa," A United States Institute of Peace *Peaceworks*, February 1996.

³ For further discussion on the prospects for and problems of the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, see John Prendergast and David R. Smock, "Angola's Elusive Peace," *CSIS Africa Notes*, No. 182 (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 1996).

⁴ See "NGOs and the Peace Process in Angola," A United States Institute of Peace *Special Report*, April 1996.

⁵ For further on the broader topic, see Pamela R. Aall, "NGOs and Conflict Management," A United States Institute of Peace *Special Report*, February 1996.

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