

1

INTRODUCTION

David R. Smock
Hrach Gregorian

During the past decade Africa has been beset by an extraordinarily heavy burden of warfare. Two to three million people lost their lives as a consequence of Africa's wars during the 1980s.¹

To help us understand why, this book examines external intervention in Africa's wars—intervention both in the sense of foreign military involvement and external efforts to promote conflict resolution, usually through mediation. Selecting Africa as the geographic focus is warranted not only by the extraordinarily large number of wars, mostly internal wars, that have ravaged the continent in recent years, but also by the frequency of external intervention, both in war making and in conflict resolution. Several recent cases of external mediation have been remarkably successful in resolving some of these conflicts and helping to end wars.

The military intervention in 1992 and 1993 for humanitarian purposes in Somalia, spearheaded by the United States but with broad international involvement, is the most dramatic recent example of international involvement in Africa's wars. The principal purpose of the action in Somalia was to facilitate the delivery of relief supplies, but the intervention also carried the expectation that international involvement would return peace and stability to Somalia.

During the 1980s seven countries and one dependent territory of sub-Saharan Africa struggled for at least some portion of the decade with debilitating warfare. These countries are Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Namibia, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda. By one author's reckoning, 150 million people or about 27 percent of Africa's population outside Egypt, covering about one-third of



the continent's land area, were living in countries seriously affected by war during the 1980s.²

Ted Robert Gurr states that "since the 1960s, the countries of Africa south of the Maghreb have been wracked by more deadly conflict than any other world region except Southeast Asia." Since 1960, eighteen full-fledged civil wars have been fought. Nearly one-third (53 of 171) of all overt military interventions between 1960 and 1985 were aimed at African countries, and most of the interveners were other African states.³

Gurr goes on to note that in 1990, more than 2.5 percent of all Africans were refugees, mostly victims of political violence. This group included 4.7 million Africans outside their home countries and 8.6 million who were internally displaced. Africa's refugee population constitutes one-half of the world's total refugee population. Moreover, Gurr and James Scarritt have identified seventy-two communal groups in Africa at risk of involvement in future conflict and at risk of victimization. "In the aggregate they make up about 45 percent of the total regional population, a proportion far higher than in any other world region."⁴ This finding suggests that the possibility of future conflict may equal or surpass the conflict of the past.

During 1992, ongoing wars in Liberia, Mozambique, Somalia, Rwanda, and Sudan continued to extract heavy tolls in lives and resources. Fighting occurred sporadically in other countries as well, but in these five cases the fighting can be counted as war because it was on a sufficiently large scale, lasted for a sustained period of time, and was conducted between armies.

The purpose of this book is not to analyze the sources of internal conflict. While there are new observations that might be offered on that subject, competent analysis is already available in such other works as *Conflict Resolution in Africa*.⁵ This book, on the other hand, is mostly confined to an examination of the external component. Our chief interest is in motives and justification for such external intervention as well as its impact on the conflicts.

We also do not attempt to go over the ground that other authors have covered regarding the conditions for ripeness and the readiness for conflict resolution.⁶ The focus here is on the role and effectiveness of external intervention, although the case material presented should also provide useful data about ripeness.

The chapters in this book make a contribution to the central topic by providing both case material and analysis. The selection of chapter topics has also been influenced by a desire to draw together findings of research projects financed by the United

States Institute of Peace through its Grant Program. With one exception, the essay on Mozambique, these chapters represent work financed by the Institute's Grant Program.

To give greater geographic cohesion to the book, we have excluded North Africa and confined our consideration to sub-Saharan Africa. Beyond that, the emphasis is on eastern and southern Africa, with particular attention to Angola-Namibia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Two chapters in the book have topical rather than geographic foci: Chapter 10 assesses the contribution of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to peacemaking in Africa and proposes ways in which the OAU's role as peacemaker could be strengthened, and chapter 2 describes the military involvement of the French, the British, and the Belgians in Africa. In addition, an afterword offers policy options to promote peacemaking, conflict management, and peacekeeping in Africa.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introductory discussion of international intervention in Africa's wars. The following section discusses external intervention in war making, and the next section assesses in somewhat greater detail the involvement of external actors in peacemaking. Other chapters are cross-referenced when the cases described there bear on points being made, but no effort is made in this introduction to summarize all the chapters.

External Involvement in the Conduct of Africa's Wars

The most common form of intervention in African conflicts has been by superpowers and by regional "hegemons" such as South Africa in the south and Libya in the north. Besides, or in addition to, conventional war, these and other local actors have engaged in a variety of hostile actions against neighboring states, ranging from propaganda campaigns and border skirmishes to terrorism and other forms of low-intensity conflict. The causes of African conflicts lie very much within the continent, but where the antagonists have been forced to rely on local resources (save for South Africa, which possesses armaments-manufacturing capability), hostilities have rarely escalated to full-scale national conflicts.

There is substantial correlation between the level of external involvement in Africa's wars and the degree of violence and bloodshed suffered by the armed forces and by civilians. Infusion of arms, personnel, technical assistance, and financial backing (until the mid-1980s mostly by the superpowers and their allies), enabled governments and opposition groups to launch increasingly lethal

interstate and intrastate campaigns. It should be noted that in a limited number of cases, such as the introduction of French forces in Chad to check Libyan aggression, external intervention may well have reduced the likelihood of further escalation. In Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Somalia, however, such intervention significantly expanded both the scope and the intensity of conflict.

Foreign intervention has been actively sought in many instances by antagonists, either to expand their deterrence or war-fighting capability or to avoid defeat at the hand of a superior foe. Although the continent has seen far fewer international wars than domestic confrontations, the latter are rarely a strictly internal affair. Parties to a civil war will always strive to improve relative power positions, and foreign actors will provide support as a means of advancing their own national and international interests. The situation becomes yet more complicated when there is a treaty or other agreement formally binding an external power to provide military and related support to an embattled regime.

During the Cold War such support was not difficult to come by, particularly in regions judged by the two blocs to be of strategic importance. Such considerations were not, of course, confined to extracontinental powers. Ann Lesch underscores in chapter 4 the acute interest of Egypt and Ethiopia, among others, in Sudanese affairs, given Sudan's geostrategic location astride the Nile and bordering on the Red Sea. External support carries a very heavy price tag for many African states, including the virtual relinquishment of their fate to third parties. The cruel paradox, according to Deng and Zartman, is that some perceive "the intensification of regional conflicts through internationalization and superpower involvement as a means of improving the chances of settlement. . . . The assumption is that even though the origins of these conflicts are internal to the countries or the region, dependency on the support of external powers has so altered conditions that ending or sustaining the conflicts is not possible without foreign intervention."⁷

For their part, external actors have found Africa difficult to avoid—for humanitarian reasons to be sure, but more important, because of the presence there of a rival power or because of Africa's attractiveness as an arena for power projection, particularly by middle-rank states. With regard to this last point, one analyst has noted, "Foreign policy designs and ambitions [can] be pursued more easily in Africa than in many parts of the world because the risk of dangerous reactions [is] small and because affordable commitments of power [can] have great impact." The Soviet Union was to some extent guided by such considerations,

and Cuba, too, saw in Angola an opportunity to assert its leadership position in the vanguard of world socialist movements.⁸ It is France, however, that offers the classic example of a medium power using Africa "to justify a foreign policy which is written in large terms."⁹

The French experience, although unique, is nonetheless instructive. France, more than other colonial powers such as Britain and Belgium, has been militarily engaged in Africa on a regular basis since the early 1960s, when most states gained independence. The weakness of the military in francophone Africa has often led to dependence on France for internal stability and for national security. France, in turn, has regarded francophone Africa as not only an economic and cultural partner but the principal arena for her more lofty world historical ambitions. Louis de Guiringaud, Giscard's foreign minister, aptly quoted by Alain Rouvez in chapter 2, reflected a line of thinking dating back to de Gaulle when he observed that Africa is the only continent where France "can still, with 500 men, change the course of history." The foreign minister's assessment is arguably still valid, at least with respect to the francophone states.

In the early 1960s France usually intervened to protect newly established postcolonial regimes against domestic uprisings; later it would engage in both open and covert operations in defense of these regimes or to undermine the influence of rival European and African powers (Biafra, 1969), to reinstate an established head of state (Gabon, 1964), or to remove one (the Central African Republic, 1979). The interventions in Gabon and the Central African Republic generated considerable controversy in Africa and in France. Remarkably, such heavy-handed tactics did not elicit as much condemnation as might be expected, particularly in Africa, demonstrating once again France's special status on the continent.

From the mid-1970s through the early 1980s the French played a major role in western efforts to stem the tide of Soviet-Cuban expansionism throughout Africa. This critical period saw France extending its reach beyond its former colonies to such far corners as Somalia and Ethiopia. Since 1990, France has assumed a more traditional role in intervening to help maintain domestic order, this time in states moving toward greater democratization.

If France and other western powers intervened in Africa to defend the status quo, the Soviets and their allies moved in to foster and aid movements sometimes inimical to the established order (as in Namibia and South Africa) as well as to prop up existing revolutionary regimes (Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique). They did so



mostly with large amounts of military aid, beginning in the mid-1960s (Somalia) and expanding dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s. Men and materiel poured in with disastrous military and economic consequences, particularly in the Horn. Paul Henze documents in chapter 3 the impact of Soviet arms and power politics on the lives of millions of victims in the Horn when he writes about Ethiopia: "Mengistu could never have indulged his predilection for dealing with every problem by arms and suppression if the Soviets had not kept him generously supplied with weapons throughout the 1980s."

Ann Lesch draws similar conclusions in her examination in chapter 4 of the impact of foreign powers on the conflict in Sudan. The list of states contributing resources to one side or the other in Sudan is depressingly long and includes, among others, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Libya, Uganda, the United States, and Zaire. She notes that external support hardens the position of governments and leads them to "conclude that if only they could obtain more arms, they could prevail militarily and avoid negotiations."

Once the genie of external intervention is out of the bottle, however, it takes on a life of its own; an action-reaction spiral spins quite beyond the control of the indigenous forces who may have invited such intervention in the first place. To quote Lesch again, "Governments find themselves captured by their external allies and caught in conflicts with their allies' opponents."

Nowhere was this point more true than in Angola, where not only the course of the war but the shape of the peace was virtually dictated by external forces. The United States and South Africa provided military support to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), while the Soviet Union and Cuba gave substantial military assistance to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government. Ironically, Daniel Papp argues in chapter 7, external military intervention did not necessarily prolong the Angolan civil war. In fact, after fourteen years of fighting, both the MPLA and UNITA "believed that they could emerge victorious," and it was the efforts of external powers—the United States, Portugal, and much later the Soviet Union—that in 1991 finally brought some measure of peace to Angola (as had been done three years earlier in neighboring Namibia, again by external actors).

In addition to external military assistance being a significant factor in war making, military assistance to prop up dictators in some cases prolonged their political rule, thereby adding to local

discontent and helping to foment instability and eventually warfare. American military assistance to Somalia and Liberia can be cited in this regard, insofar as the repressive regimes of Siad Barre and Samuel Doe, respectively, were to some extent dependent on military support from the United States. The same can be said of Soviet military assistance to Mengistu in Ethiopia.

While the principal sources of external military assistance during the 1970s and 1980s were the superpowers and European states, South Africa served as a major arms supplier to two rebel movements—Renamo in Mozambique and UNITA in Angola. Prior to the involvement of South Africa, Renamo received its initial support from the government of Rhodesia. Other African states have also been unable to resist military meddling, as the military assistance from African states to the Taylor forces in Liberia illustrates.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, regional hegemony will continue to play a significant role in African conflicts. But resource scarcity is likely to limit the length and intensity of fighting engendered by such involvement. Certainly, the withdrawal of the superpowers and their allies will substantially reduce the potential for conflict escalation. If, however, military disengagement is not accompanied by a commitment to some form of diplomatic or peacekeeping intervention, horrors such as Somalia, Liberia, and Mozambique will continue to be visited on African peoples with results no less ruinous than those suffered in the past three decades.

External Involvement in Mediation

While the costs of Africa's wars continue to be devastating, dramatic progress has been made in several cases toward reaching peace settlements. In many of these cases external mediation has been a critical factor in conflict resolution, and on the whole, external mediation has a better record in settling Africa's wars than does conflict resolution through bilateral negotiations.¹⁰

Although some wars, such as those in Uganda and Chad, came to an end through military victory, in other war situations external mediation and in some cases peacekeeping activities have been productively employed. The wars in Ethiopia ended primarily through military victory, but U.S. mediation contributed to resolving them. External mediation and peacekeeping brought independence and peace to Namibia. Mediation efforts proved critical to the initial peace agreement settlement in Angola. External mediators facilitated the cease-fire agreement between the Mozambique



government and Renamo and increased the likelihood of a settlement there. External mediation and peacekeeping have featured prominently in Liberia.

These cases of external intervention have historical roots. The first significant external involvement in African peacemaking in the postindependence era was the United Nations' intervention in the Congo/Zaire between 1960 and 1964. Some inconclusive mediation occurred during the Nigerian civil war in the mid-1960s and external intervention was critically important in bringing temporary peace to Sudan in the 1970s, as well as in resolving the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean war in 1979-80.

In considering external intervention in the form of mediation in Africa's wars, we need to be mindful of which actors have played the principal roles and how effective they have been. External mediation in Africa's wars has not been confined to a single type of actor. Nor has successful mediation been the exclusive achievement of one particular player, whether a state or an organization.

The United Nations played a very active role in the early years of independent Africa; the most notable case was the Congo/Zaire. In addition to mediating and promoting political reconciliation among the parties in conflict, the UN mission engaged in peacekeeping, involving a force of twenty thousand officers and soldiers. The character of the UN involvement was criticized severely by many member states. The anti-Lumumba posture of the United Nations and the entanglement of peacekeeping forces in military operations to forestall Katangan secession generated considerable controversy. The difficulties encountered in the Congo generated subsequent caution, and the United Nations remained on the sidelines for most subsequent conflicts in Africa. But the United Nations has recently intervened very significantly in Namibia, Somalia, and Mozambique, although less as a mediator than as a peacekeeper.

The OAU (chapter 10) should in many ways be the ideal body to resolve Africa's conflicts, but the OAU was not successful in two early instances of intervention, and its future involvements have consequently been limited. Many observers looked to the OAU to intervene in the Nigerian civil war to bring the war to an end. But by taking a strong stand against Biafra's secession, the OAU became too partisan to be an effective mediator. The OAU was caught in its perennial dilemma of wanting to promote peace in cases of civil war while at the same time condemning all secessionist movements and always supporting the government in power. These positions, although understandable, have

severely limited the peacemaking effectiveness of the OAU since its founding.

The OAU also failed to serve as an effective mediator in the Chad war in 1977. And its sponsorship of a 1981 peacekeeping force in Chad in 1981–82 was short-lived because of severe financial problems and a lack of commitment to conflict resolution on the part of the warring parties. The OAU force was never able to achieve an effective cease-fire, and some OAU members continued to aid the conflicting parties with war supplies. OAU members remained divided on what action the OAU should take in Chad. The difficulty of achieving a consensus in the OAU has continued to plague its conflict resolution efforts.

The intervention of a sixteen-nation African regional organization, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in an energetic effort to resolve the Liberian civil war is an important example of a new type of external intervention—intervention by a subregional organization. ECOWAS has plunged very deeply and courageously into the Liberian imbroglio. Resolution of that civil war may prove beyond ECOWAS's capabilities, but the organization is making a valiant effort to promote peace. ECOWAS has been the only multilateral force willing to intervene on the scale required, and it represents the best hope for a return to peace and civil order in Liberia.

With Nigeria taking the lead, ECOWAS initiated mediation in mid-1990 between the Liberian government of Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia. In August 1990, ECOWAS sent between four thousand and five thousand troops to Liberia to impose a cease-fire. Since separating the warring parties in November 1991, the West African force of about eight thousand has presided over an uneasy peace while the sponsoring states continue to mediate among those in conflict. The effort has achieved some success, but the financial and military burden, particularly on Nigeria, is very heavy. Moreover, not all the West African states have been supportive of the effort, and some have aided Taylor's forces. Some ECOWAS member states also resent the domination of the operation by Nigeria, and Taylor has complained bitterly about the preponderance of Nigerian and Ghanaian troops. The ECOWAS effort is surely commendable, but the problems it is encountering illustrate those that would likely plague future interventions by such regional organizations.

Other African states, particularly through the involvement of their presidents, have attempted to mediate conflicts. Examples include the mediation efforts in the Mozambique civil war by



Kenya's Daniel arap Moi and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, and the attempt by President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire to mediate between the MPLA government and the UNITA rebels in Angola. Haile Selassie was the catalyst for the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement that terminated fighting in Sudan for several years. Ethiopian president Meles Zenawi was a very effective mediator among Somalia's conflicting parties in 1993. On the whole, however, although African presidents have been very eager to be helpful, their record as principal mediators has not been impressive.

Yet the heads of the so-called frontline states in southern Africa, defined loosely as those bordering South Africa, played very important facilitative roles in the negotiations that terminated the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe war and the Namibian conflict. In the case of Zimbabwe, the frontline states were both independent actors as well as effective and trusted intermediaries between the British and American mediators and the Patriotic Front. Similarly, in the case of Namibia, the frontline states, along with Nigeria, pressed the South West Africa People's Organization to participate in the Western Contact Group negotiations and facilitated the later mediation efforts led by Chester Crocker, U.S. assistant secretary of state.

Particularly noteworthy have been critical roles played by the U.S. government in several negotiations. The United States served as principal negotiator in the case of Namibia, first in leading the Western Contact Group and subsequently when Crocker served as principal mediator. Assistant secretary of state Herman Cohen intervened at a critical juncture to help bring the Ethiopian civil war to an end. Equally important have been the major supportive roles that the United States has played in Mozambique, Angola, Liberia, Zimbabwe, and Chad. The American involvement in Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia is described in detail in chapters that follow. In Liberia the United States has provided \$29 million to the ECOWAS peacekeeping effort, and in Zimbabwe the United States aided the British, who took the lead in the Lancaster House mediation.

The USSR, the other superpower, never served as principal mediator in any African negotiations, but it did play supportive roles in the Namibia and Angola negotiations. Moreover, after Gorbachev came to power the Soviet Union reduced its aid to Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Angola, thereby bringing pressure on all of those governments to reduce their war efforts. In the cases of Mozambique and Angola this reduction in aid was one source of pressure on the governments to pursue a path toward peace.

Former colonial powers have been centrally involved in two mediation efforts. The first case is that of the British, who served as principal mediators in the Lancaster House conference on Zimbabwe. In addition to mediating, Britain and the United States controlled the decisions about continuing or suspending economic sanctions that had been imposed against Rhodesia, and they were willing to offer economic assistance if a settlement was reached. The British, in cooperation with the Americans, actively put forward negotiating positions, and at key stages of the negotiations the British were able to prod the process forward by threatening to give greater legitimacy to the claims of the opposing side. The other case of successful involvement of a former colonial power is the intervention of the Portuguese in mediating the end to the Angolan civil war, described in chapter 8. Moreover, the French played a supportive role to the OAU in Chad in the early 1980s. The involvement of the Italian government as mediator in Mozambique, described in chapter 9, is a case of a European government serving as mediator in a country with which it had no colonial ties. Curiously, no non-African Third-World government or agency has played the role of mediator in an effort to resolve an African war.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), particularly religious groups, have played noteworthy roles. The World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) (chapter 6) served as principal mediators in the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement on Sudan. Leading Mozambican clerics along with the Sant' Egidio Community in Italy were central actors in the Mozambique negotiations (chapter 9). Quaker intermediaries provided a helpful communication channel between the warring parties in the Nigerian civil war, although they never succeeded in bringing the two sides together. Beyond these contributions to conflict resolution, churches are having an increasingly important influence on Africa's political life and have been very supportive of the push toward democracy in Kenya, Zaire, Cameroon, Zambia, Ghana, Madagascar, and South Africa. Another NGO initiative worth mentioning is that of former U.S. president Jimmy Carter and the Carter Center in Atlanta, which engaged in unsuccessful mediation efforts in both Sudan and Ethiopia.

One analyst has asserted that mediators tend to function best when they come from the same region as the parties, an assertion that in this case suggests that African mediators would be likely to have the best record in settling Africa's wars.¹¹ The summary above indicates that that suggestion has not been borne out. African



presidents have attempted various mediations, and the frontline states did play significant supportive roles in the Namibia and Zimbabwe negotiations, but among state actors the United States and former colonial powers have been more effective as mediators than officials from African states.¹²

One serious constraint on effective African intervention is the essentially internal nature of most of these wars. African states are reluctant to invite mediators, especially from neighboring states, and thereby admit that they are unable to manage their own affairs. Officials from other states are also generally viewed by the rebel parties as partial to the status quo and to the party in power, a view that is consistent with the position of the OAU, thereby rendering them unattractive as impartial mediators.

It has been argued that because mediation in internal conflicts implies interference in internal affairs, nonstate actors are more easily acceptable than other states as mediators.¹³ This possibility may explain the important roles that have been played by religious organizations in Sudan's and Mozambique's negotiations, but the evidence available does not indicate that on the whole NGOs have been as effective as state actors in mediating Africa's wars.

The very significant role of the United States and the European states seems related to the assets, resources, and leverage available to these powers, as will be described in sections that follow. The African experience, in which the United States and the former colonial powers seem to have a better record of successful mediation than either the OAU or African leaders, is consistent with the conclusions drawn by Jacob Bercovitch from two international data sets. He concludes that mediation by superpowers is more likely to be successful than mediation efforts by medium or small powers. He also concludes that government officials have better chances of success than mediators from international and regional organizations.¹⁴

Motivations for Mediation

The reasons why mediators offer their services are usually not articulated and must be inferred. A look at particular cases illustrates the range of motives. In cases such as the United States in Namibia and Angola, external intervention in the form of mediation increases the likelihood that the intervening power can protect its interests in the settlement process.¹⁵ Portugal's involvement in Angola and Nigeria's involvement in Chad and Liberia have

probably been motivated both by a compassionate desire to bring the conflict to an end and by the desire of those states to enhance their prestige in the process. ECOWAS's intervention in Liberia has probably derived in part from fears that similar insurgencies could develop in neighboring states unless the Liberia conflict is resolved promptly and decisively. Humanitarian concerns, including a reduction of bloodshed and suffering, most likely have motivated the churches to be involved in Mozambique and Sudan and have probably motivated other actors as well.

In some cases, the state that offers to mediate wants to reduce the impact of the conflict on itself. The frontline states had a clear interest in helping resolve the Namibia conflict to reduce the likelihood of South Africa's pursuing its policy of destabilization in the region. The involvement of former colonial powers, such as Britain in Zimbabwe and Portugal in Angola, is no doubt partially motivated by a desire to improve their colonial record by bringing peace to former colonies that went to war during the process of decolonization.

Motivations of warring parties for accepting offers of mediation are equally multifaceted. Frequently, external mediation may seem the only way of achieving an agreement, because a military stalemate has been reached and bilateral negotiations have proved to be either impossible or unproductive. But acceptance of a mediator may also be motivated by a belief that the mediator can deliver the other side in the dispute. Angola, for example, concluded that the United States could deliver South Africa in the negotiations over Namibia.

In Mozambique, Renamo accepted mediation as a way to enhance its own status. Conversely, a state's rejection of mediation may reflect reluctance to grant the rebel group the standing it would attain by being party to mediated negotiations. This motive was a factor in the resistance of the Nigerian government to accepting external mediators during the Nigerian civil war. On the other hand, intervention by ECOWAS in Liberia was seen by President Doe as the only alternative to defeat at the hands of Charles Taylor's forces.

In chapter 3 Paul Henze articulates the factors that contributed to the mutually reinforcing interests of the U.S. government and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in engaging in a mediated settlement. The unsuccessful mediation initiative by Jimmy Carter in the spring of 1989 laid useful groundwork for the later American initiatives. The special American interest in the plight of Ethiopian Jews focused high-level U.S. attention



on the rapidly unfolding events in Ethiopia. The EPRDF was responsive to U.S. involvement because the American proposals contributed to EPRDF's ascendance and its takeover of Addis Ababa. There was also a very strong desire for good relations with the United States, both because of historic ties between the two countries and because of expectations that significant U.S. aid would follow a peace settlement.

Assets for Successful Mediation

An indispensable role for all mediators is to facilitate communication between the parties in dispute. But facilitating communication is usually not sufficient. Zartman has pointed out the importance of trust. "What is actually indispensable is trust in the conciliator, who then builds trust between the parties by becoming a channel between them. Indeed, it is the initial absence of trust between the parties that makes the conciliator's role necessary."¹⁶ Conversely, loss of trust led to the removal of President Mobutu as mediator for Angola and of Presidents Moi and Mugabe in June 1990 as mediators for Mozambique.

Beyond communication and trust, most mediators recognize the need to formulate, revise, and reformulate proposals for negotiation. In other words, they are actively engaged in coming up with a mutually acceptable formula for settlement. This technique has characterized U.S. involvement in Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia.

Although some mediators capitalize on their noninvolvement in the dispute and play the role of disinterested go-between (for example, the Quakers in Nigeria), it is often helpful for the mediator to have ties to one or both parties. These ties frequently enable the mediator to induce or force concessions. The amount of leverage the mediator possesses, measured by ability to put pressure on one or both parties to accept a proposed settlement, helps determine the mediator's potential effectiveness. The use of leverage in this fashion pushes mediators into the role that Zartman calls manipulator, in contrast to communicator and formulator.¹⁷ The British certainly played the role of manipulator in Zimbabwe, where side payments were offered, and ECOWAS is doing so in Liberia.

Different types of mediators bring different assets to the mediation process. A superpower generally plays a different role in mediation than an NGO. As the United States did in Namibia, the

superpower frequently has a relationship with one or both parties and exploits the leverage at its disposal. In this case, the United States was even supplying military support to one of the warring parties. On the other hand, the NGO, like the WCC and the AACC in Sudan, plays primarily to its moral authority and its reputation for fairness. Yet even churches may use leverage. While the WCC-AACC primarily relied on its strength as a disinterested, neutral party trusted by both sides, it also used its influence as donor of humanitarian aid in Sudan to pressure both parties. Mediators with leverage are more likely to engage in what has been termed bargaining behavior, while mediators with less leverage tend to perform facilitative functions.¹⁸ The contrast between the Western Contact Group in Namibia and the Catholic church in Mozambique illustrates the difference between bargaining and facilitative behavior.

The amount of leverage available to a mediator is a critically important determinant of its success as a mediator. The British and American governments were able to offer financial enticements as part of the Zimbabwe settlement reached at Lancaster House. In the negotiations over Namibia, both carrots and sticks were used with South Africa. Prior to economic sanctions being imposed on South Africa, the Western Contact Group, which was composed of the major western powers, was able to threaten withdrawal of the western veto of sanctions at the United Nations to win South African cooperation. In the Crocker round of discussions, the United States was able to encourage South Africa to be more cooperative through the policy of constructive engagement.

Major powers possess a clear advantage in offering rewards and punishments when they serve as mediators. In this regard the African experience is consistent with the conclusions drawn by Bercovitch in his international comparisons: "The possession of resources and an active strategy provide the basis for successful mediation."¹⁹ Such an active strategy is not confined to the offering of side payments but extends to active involvement in the formulation of settlement options and in coaxing and cajoling to obtain accommodations from both parties.

In chapter 3 Paul Henze explains that in the case of Ethiopia the United States had little leverage in terms of credible threats of sanctions or coercion. The success of the United States mediation derived primarily from a different set of assets, namely, the very impressive skills of three centrally placed American diplomats who intervened at critical moments with helpful proposals. Among their accomplishments was facilitation of the flight of President



Mengistu from the country just as the battle for Addis Ababa threatened to commence.

Effective leverage is not confined to the United States and the European powers. President Mobutu enjoyed leverage as a mediator in the Angolan civil war in 1989 because Zaire had been helping to channel aid to the UNITA guerrillas and hence held a trump card in its relations with the MPLA government. In addition, Zaire was capable of contributing to the further destabilization of Angola if it chose to do so. On the positive side, Zaire could make a substantial contribution to Angola's prosperity if peace was attained.²⁰

In chapter 8 Abiodun Williams assesses the assets contributing to the initial success of the Angola negotiations. Portugal was effective as the mediator because it was accepted as an impartial and credible third party. But the Portuguese role had to be reinforced by the roles of the United States and the USSR, which were very active and effective in formulating negotiating positions. Equally important was the fact that the United States and the USSR each had clients among the parties in conflict, and at crucial points in the negotiating process both superpowers were able to exercise pressure on their clients. Williams also emphasizes the importance of the adoption of a mechanism to assure compliance with the negotiated agreement—the United States, the USSR, and Portugal were able to organize and help finance the Joint Political and Military Commission and the Joint Verification and Monitoring Commission to enforce the terms of the settlement. In addition to this external intervention, Williams points out, the essential conditions for the negotiated settlement included the desire for a settlement on the part of the disputants; a military stalemate; seizing of the right moment for mediation, which occurred in January 1990; and the easing of the Cold War.

Problems Encountered by International Bodies

The United Nations and the OAU in many ways ought to be the bodies to take the lead in mediating Africa's conflicts. And yet they encounter serious problems when faced with this task. International bodies generally find it difficult to reach consensus on what positions to adopt. This was true of the United Nations in the Congo and Namibia. It has been true of the OAU in all its attempts at peacemaking, including the Nigerian civil war, Chad, and Uganda-Tanzania, and it plagues the current ECOWAS intervention in Liberia as well.

Sometimes the difficulty arises when one member is perceived to be using the organization to promote its own intervention and its own interests. Some have accused Nigeria of doing so in Chad and Liberia. The USSR accused the United States of manipulating the United Nations in similar fashion in the Congo. Recognizing the difficulties encountered by international organizations in resolving African conflicts, some analysts have contended that there is a trend away from international organizations serving as mediator and peacekeeper.²¹ But UN involvement in Namibia, Mozambique, and Somalia, and ECOWAS intervention in Liberia suggest a new activism by international organizations in African peacemaking.

It is attractive to think that all of Africa's conflicts should be mediated by Africans and by African organizations, particularly the OAU, but the track record has not been impressive. It has been mentioned that the OAU has been very hesitant to become involved since its setback in Chad. Moreover, the OAU has particular difficulty with internal conflicts and secessionist movements. The OAU charter recognizes current borders, and as a grouping of African heads of state the OAU has always been a defender of the status quo, both in terms of boundaries and in terms of political leadership. The most painful process of defending the status quo came in the case of the Uganda-Tanzania war, when the OAU was obliged to call on Tanzania to stop its aggression even though many member states favored Tanzania's military effort to remove Idi Amin from office.

The OAU has frequently called on individual African presidents to serve as mediators and peacemakers. On other occasions, African presidents have put themselves forward as prospective mediators, or they have been invited to play this role by one or more of the parties. But these efforts have generally been unproductive. Mediation has often been limited to a single mediating session, and the mediator has frequently lacked the institutional and financial support to sustain the process. One difficulty has been that African presidents have such heavy demands on their time that they cannot conduct sustained negotiations. When the United States has served as mediator, the assistant secretary of state for Africa has generally taken the lead. But when an African has been called to mediate, the hard-pressed president has generally had to step forward, rather than one of his lieutenants. Moreover, African mediators rarely have the resources to make side payments and to serve as "manipulators" rather than communicators or facilitators.²²



In chapter 10, after assessing the shortcomings of the OAU in mediating Africa's wars, Sam Amoo suggests changes that might enable the OAU to be more effective. A principal constraint is the OAU's limited resources, both financial resources and resources of expertise in such complex fields as peacekeeping, monitoring, organization of constitutional conferences, referenda and elections, and "peace serving." Amoo suggests a multilateral approach that will enable the natural assets of the OAU as mediator to be used while the United Nations apparatus and resources would be employed to provide leverage, moral authority, credibility, legitimacy, and physical resources. With the end of the Cold War, Amoo expects a decline in American and European involvement in helping to settle Africa's wars, which would make enhancing the OAU's peacemaking capabilities more important than ever. Carefully planned collaboration between the United Nations and the OAU offers the best chance to achieve this goal. Amoo also suggests an approach by which the OAU might overcome its reluctance to intervene in internal conflicts and in turn respond constructively to the human misery that Africa's wars impose on Africa's populace. Recent initiatives by the OAU to bring peace to Rwanda and the OAU's plan to create a conflict resolution section within its secretariat provide grounds for some hope for increased OAU effectiveness.

Mediation Coalitions

In virtually no case of successful mediation has a single mediator succeeded without support from partners. Single mediators acting alone have rarely been successful. Successful consortia, on the other hand, have brought together partners offering a range of interests, skills, and types of leverage.

The ECOWAS intervention in Liberia is very much a collective effort by West African states. The cease-fire agreement in Mozambique was achieved through the combined efforts of Mozambique clerics, a Catholic lay order in Italy, the Italian government, the Kenyan and Zimbabwean governments, and the United States. Each of these parties brought valuable but distinct assets to the negotiation process. The two African governments were seen as allies to the two parties in conflict. The religious figures were perceived to be impartial and evenhanded. The Italian government and the United States were large aid givers and hence commanded leverage.

Careful coordination between western powers and the African frontline states was critically important in both the Namibia and the Zimbabwe negotiations. The Commonwealth Secretariat played an important supportive role in the Zimbabwe negotiations, effectively coordinating leverage from Commonwealth members. The USSR provided valuable encouragement and pressure in the final stages of the Namibia negotiations. The initial agreement in Angola involved a combination of the two superpowers, the former colonial power (Portugal), several African states, and the United Nations.

In chapter 6 Christopher Mitchell argues that to think in terms of single mediators who are either successful or unsuccessful is too simplistic. We should think of mediation as a process involving a set of tasks and functions that must be successfully fulfilled, usually by a combination and succession of actors. Among the roles to be performed are those of facilitator, convener, advocate, synchronizer, forerunner, guarantor, decoupler, unifier, and "enskiller." Although the role played at one stage by an external intervener might appear unsuccessful, that intervention might turn out nevertheless to have made a vitally important contribution to the total mediation process; perhaps this "failure" will lay very helpful groundwork for the next stage of the mediation process, which is often managed by another mediator. Mitchell illustrates the utility of this approach by analyzing the process of external mediation in Sudan, demonstrating the mutually supportive roles played by a succession of mediators, most of whom were deemed at the time of their intervention to be unsuccessful but who nevertheless contributed to the success of the total mediation process.

Limitations of Mediation

Although Mitchell's analysis is helpful in pointing out that attempts at mediation that appear to be unsuccessful may nevertheless contribute to the success of the total process, many attempts at mediation are simply failures.

In some cases prospective mediators, despite encouragement to become involved, refuse to do so because of the apparent hopelessness of the situation or because they see no personal benefit to be derived from such engagement. Despite its effective involvement in many other conflicts, the United States has been very reluctant to become heavily engaged in the Liberian civil war, although it has assisted the ECOWAS effort. Before February 1992, prospective mediators also held back from involvement in



Somalia, in part because of the danger incurred in even visiting the country.

In some cases neither party to the dispute has been interested in mediation, but in other cases one party has been responsive while the opposing side held back. This situation was true of the OAU attempt to intervene in the Nigerian civil war. Charles Taylor has only very reluctantly dealt with the ECOWAS representatives in Liberia. The mediator is unacceptable in some cases because no mediator is wanted and in other cases because the particular mediator is thought to be biased toward the opposing side—part of the problem with the OAU in Nigeria.

Acceptance of the principle of mediation and agreement on who is to mediate do not mean that success can be assured. Some mediators fail because they are not effective as mediators or because they do not command sufficient leverage to force an agreement, but more frequently mediation fails because the conflict is not ripe for resolution. Various authors have spelled out conditions for ripeness.²³ There is some disagreement about what conditions are required, but no one argues that mediation can succeed when ripeness is absent. Even superpowers with maximum command of carrots and sticks cannot force resolution of Africa's wars. Local issues are the major cause of these wars, and they will be resolved only when local conditions are right for settlement.

In chapter 5 Ann Lesch assesses why external mediators have not been effective in resolving the Sudanese civil war since the collapse of the Addis Ababa Accord. The main problem has been the lack of political will on the part of both the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement to seek a settlement. In addition, none of the mediators who have presented themselves has been thought to possess the necessary credibility or clout. Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, and the United States have all been thought by the Sudanese government to be insufficiently impartial to be trusted. Lesch argues that the most important diplomatic initiatives and breakthroughs have come from the Sudanese themselves with no significant outside involvement. Both sides have stressed that the political issues must be resolved by Sudanese without outside intervention. In part this insistence was a reaction against the externally mediated Addis Ababa Accord, which brought a temporary peace in 1972 but was thought to be flawed in part precisely because it was negotiated abroad and lacked sufficient internal support. Although Lesch contends that some of the foreign intervention in negotiations has even been damaging to the prospects for a settlement, in chapter 6 Mitchell portrays several

of the “failed” interventions as, in fact, helpful contributions to the total process of promoting conflict resolution in Sudan.

In chapter 7 Daniel Papp recognizes the essential mediator role played by Chester Crocker in the Namibian accords, but he also places Crocker’s role in a wider context of factors that contributed to the final settlement, thereby demonstrating that effective mediation is not a sufficient condition for conflict resolution. The impact of Gorbachev’s new policies in the USSR and the economic problems confronting that nation put pressure on Angola and Cuba to negotiate. Renewed U.S. military assistance to UNITA placed added pressure on the MPLA forces. On account of changing circumstances (which Papp details), Cuba, the USSR, and South Africa revised their calculations of the likelihood of gaining all they desired through military means and in turn became more favorably disposed toward compromise. The recognition of a stalemate by the opposing forces led them to conclude that negotiation might gain them more than continued fighting. All these factors provided a favorable context for the final agreement, which Crocker was able to help the parties devise.

The renewal of bloody conflict in Angola also demonstrates that the signing of a mediated agreement does not assure peace. UNITA refused to accept the outcome of the elections and returned to the battlefield to pursue its goals. Several factors contributed to the failure of the peace process in Angola, including the fact that the agreed-upon demobilization of forces was not implemented prior to the elections. Moreover, the monitoring process by the United Nations and the international community was insufficient both in design and in execution.

Not only is mediation not a sufficient condition for conflict resolution, mediation may also not be necessary to resolve African conflicts. The best example of this point is South Africa. An earlier type of external intervention in the form of economic sanctions did play an important part in creating ripeness in South Africa, but most of the progress made in negotiations has been achieved without external intervention. Although fifty UN observers were sent to South Africa in 1992 and other foreign observers have attended some of the negotiating sessions, external mediation has not occurred. The accommodative disposition of both President F. W. de Klerk and African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela enabled the negotiations to get under way without external facilitation. Another factor contributing to successful bilateral negotiations in this case is the quality of institutional development in South Africa, providing a level of institutional support not available in many other African states.



Looking to the Future

The most significant recent development contributing to ripeness has been the termination of the Cold War. With the Cold War over, there is no superpower rivalry being played out through clients in Africa and elsewhere. In its last days the USSR withdrew or dramatically reduced its economic and military support to Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Angola, and it promoted the peaceful resolution of those conflicts. The United States has become a major promoter of peaceful, mediated settlements of Africa's wars.

The prominence of the United States in recent years in these peace processes has been remarkable. In addition to sending troops to Somalia, the United States played the lead role as mediator in Namibia and Ethiopia, and it has played very important supportive roles in Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Liberia. In some cases, such as Angola, the United States has been thrust to the forefront because of its earlier involvement in the conflict as a superpower participant. But in this post-Cold War era, the United States is an attractive mediator because of its resources, leverage, and knowledge of African affairs. Moreover, the State Department has become an effective advocate for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It has also established a creditable track record as a mediator, particularly in the Namibian negotiations.

Largely on the basis of his analysis of the Mozambique experience, Witney Schneidman worries (chapter 9) that the demise of the Cold War has marginalized Africa diplomatically and that in the future the major powers, including the United States, will step forward as mediators only reluctantly. "The fact that the major powers have no overriding security interests and few national interests in Mozambique has lessened the urgency with which governments outside Africa have tried to promote an end to the conflict." He cites Liberia as a parallel case. On the positive side he points out that the end of the Cold War means that the potential for positive-sum outcomes of African conflicts is greater, because the United States and the USSR are no longer battling for influence. He wonders whether successive U.S. administrations will have the political will to remain involved in difficult and protracted mediation processes in which the potential rewards for the United States are likely to be modest. He speculates that African actors may play more prominent future roles in mediation in Africa and sees African diplomacy as an essential ingredient for ending African wars in the post-Cold War period.



The assertive roles that Nigeria and ECOWAS have played in Liberia suggest a possible future scenario. Nigeria is becoming a major regional power with the economic and military clout and the human resources to support mediation and peacekeeping at least on a modest scale. Nigeria seems eager to project itself as a peacemaker and influencer of the political life of West Africa. The Liberian case is testing whether Nigeria has sufficient resources to sustain a major peacekeeping effort. It is also testing the degree to which other states in the region will tolerate Nigeria's new prominence. It may turn out that other states will be reluctant to let Nigeria serve as peacemaker for fear it will assert unacceptable levels of influence and control.

In thinking of regional power, one can only speculate about the role that a liberated South Africa may play in southern Africa. Like Nigeria, a postapartheid South Africa will have the military and economic resources to project itself regionally. It could decide to play the role of peacemaker. But questions similar to those that arise about Nigeria present themselves in regard to South Africa.

On the other hand, nations such as Nigeria and South Africa might more modestly and more constructively work through their respective regional organizations, ECOWAS and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference. The outcome of ECOWAS's intervention in Liberia will probably shape that organization's future disposition toward regional mediation and peacekeeping.

One hopes that the OAU could reshape itself to be more productively responsive to the requirements of peacemaking, and chapter 10 offers suggestions as to how this might be achieved.

A move is currently under way to organize an informal grouping of former African officials, including former heads of state, who have experience in mediation and who are widely respected. This group could share experiences and keep members abreast of developments in trouble spots while remaining current on the most recent learnings about mediation. This group could also serve as a pool of potential mediators that could be tapped by parties seeking their services.

Although African actors may become more effective promoters of peace in Africa, recent experience in Somalia and Mozambique suggests a continuing dependence on the United Nations and the United States to carry much of the burden of peacemaking and peacekeeping.

In addition to helping settle wars, outside powers can also assist with the resolution of conflicts before they develop into open



hostilities. C. S. Whitaker, after analyzing several cases in which foreign intervention to make peace was flawed in its approach or too long delayed, has offered several recommendations for how foreign powers, both African and non-African, can contribute to the resolution of conflict in Africa. While assistance with mediation and with peacekeeping may be essential in bringing wars to an end, it is better to shift from invoking peace after war to resolving conflict peacefully. Whitaker urges African diplomats to develop improved methods to identify and defuse conflicts before hostilities break out in neighboring states. Moreover, "pro-activism must replace passivity and reactive response." Further, countries in the region as well as ex-colonial powers and superpower states need to exert coercive pressure and otherwise insist on the peaceful resolution of conflict. Quick and decisive intervention may be the only hope of preventing the outbreak of hostilities. Finally, all parties to the dispute must be included in the consultations, and "information on the respective positions and priorities of all parties must be symmetrically available to those involved" to avoid incorrect assumptions or incomplete or unacceptable bargaining positions.²⁴

In the afterword of this volume, Chester Crocker emphasizes the need for creative programs of military demobilization, retraining, and weapons collection and destruction to reduce the exacerbation of conflict caused by the oversupply of light arms in so many African societies. He also emphasizes the need to provide technical assistance and to transfer capabilities and training in order to strengthen African security and peacemaking institutions, particularly the OAU. Moreover, the United Nations and the United States need to provide the resources necessary to enhance the leverage of the peacemaking efforts of regional organizations in Africa. In these and other ways the United States needs to do what it can to expand African capabilities to both make peace and keep the peace.

In the best future, the number of African conflicts would be reduced to the point that mediation, peacemaking, and peacekeeping services would not be in such frequent demand. Although one can hope that the trend toward greater democratic pluralism in Africa will reduce the number and seriousness of internal and international conflicts, that is probably unreasonably optimistic.

Notes

We want to express our thanks to Dan Snodderly, our editor, for his professionalism and helpfulness in bringing this book to production.

1. Raymond W. Copson, *Africa's Wars and Prospects for Peace* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, forthcoming).

2. Ibid.

3. Ted Robert Gurr, "Theories of Political Violence and Revolution in the Third World," in Francis M. Deng and I. William Zartman (eds.), *Conflict Resolution in Africa* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1991), 153.

4. Ibid., 154.

5. See note 3 for full citation.

6. I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Stephen John Stedman, *Peacemaking in Civil War: International Mediation in Zimbabwe, 1974-1980* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991); and Richard Haass, *Conflicts Unending: The U.S. and Regional Disputes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 27-29.

7. Deng and Zartman, *Conflict Resolution*, 12.

8. Copson, *Africa's Wars*. I. William Zartman writes: "External powers are pulled into African states and their need to borrow economic and political means; such interference would be far more pervasive if it did not operate under the self-limiting effect of low interest by outside states in African affairs, which protects African states from the effects of power asymmetry" (*International Relations in the New Africa* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987], vi).

9. John Chipman, *French Military Policy and African Security*, Adelphi Paper No. 201 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1985), 1. This topic is also treated by Francis Terr McNamara, *France in Black Africa* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1989), 143-182.

10. Mediation can be defined as the intervention by third parties as intermediaries, usually by invitation and with the concurrence of parties to the dispute, with the stated objective of achieving settlement between the conflicting parties.

11. I. William Zartman, "African Mediation," in John Harbeson and Donald Rothchild (eds.), *African International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991).

12. William Zartman, "Conflict Reduction: Prevention, Management, and Resolution," in Deng and Zartman, *Conflict Resolution*, 311.

13. Ibid.

14. Jacob Bercovitch, "The Conditions for Successful Mediation," *Negotiation Journal* (January 1991):26.



15. Saadia Touval, "Gaining Entry to Mediation in Communal Strife" (Working paper no. 6, Spring 1991, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University).
16. Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution*, 238.
17. Zartman, "Conflict Reduction," 312. Chester Crocker has a useful discussion of leverage and the role of fear in *High Noon in Southern Africa* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 474–476.
18. Vivienne Jabri, *Mediating Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 25.
19. Bercovitch, "Successful Mediation," 27–28.
20. Copson, *Africa's Wars*.
21. C. R. Mitchell and K. Webbs (eds.), "Introduction," in *New Approaches to International Mediation* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 5–6.
22. Zartman, "Conflict Reduction," 313.
23. See note 6.
24. C. S. Whitaker, "Opportunities Lost and Prospects for the Future" (Unpublished paper), 1991, 16.