

**Conflict Prevention in Africa at the end of the Twentieth Century: Seizing
Opportunities to Rescue an Endangered Continent**

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in partial fulfillment of
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Abstract

This thesis is a comparative study of four cases of conflict prevention in Africa. The cases are divided into two sets – failed and (qualified) successful cases of prevention. The first set - failed cases - are Rwanda and Liberia whilst the second set - (qualified) successful cases - are Lesotho and the Central African Republic. Whilst these cases differ in terms of outcome, they are similar in many respects. They are all African countries and emerged from the shackles of colonialism in the early 1960s with similar economic and political systems. In addition, they are all less developed and share similar socio-cultural characteristics, with at least two or more ethnic groups.

The thesis argues that, even though Africa seems to be the most violent continent in the world in terms of its share of the number of intra-state conflicts, conflict prevention efforts do not match the scale and levels of destruction on the continent. Against this background, the thesis investigates questions such as the following: What is the most effective way to bridge the warning-response gap? What is the most efficient method of mobilizing the much needed 'political will' to prevent conflict? Why has it been difficult to prevent conflicts in Africa? Specifically, the central question of this thesis is: *How can preventive action be made a favored policy choice towards the handling of conflicts in Africa - a continent that carries the largest burden of conflict?* It is hoped that answers to this question will help direct the attention of policy makers to how to act preventively in Africa to stop conflicts before they start. The thesis focuses on the role that regional organizations can play in conflict prevention vis-à-vis the role of the international community. While preventing conflict presents monumental challenges, through case studies, the thesis demonstrates that where there is political will and leadership, it is possible to surmount these difficulties.

FOR YASMIN

My daughter, love, inspiration

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Abbreviations

AFL	-	Armed Forces of Liberia
ANC	-	African National Congress
BCP	-	Basotholand Congress Party
BDF	-	Botswana Defence Force
BNP	-	Basotho National Party
CAR	-	Central African Republic
CIFP	-	Country Indicators for Foreign Policy
CTF	-	Combined Joint Task Force
DRC	-	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOMOG	-	ECOWAS Intervention Force
ECOWAS	-	Economic Community of West African States
ESAF	-	Extended Structural Adjustment Facility
FEWER	-	Forum for Early Warning and Response
FLS	-	Front-Line States
GEDS	-	Global Event Data System
HDI	-	Human Development Index
ICISS	-	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
IFIs	-	International Financial Institutions
IFMC	-	Inter-Faith Mediation Committee
IGAD	-	Inter-Governmental Authority
IGNU	-	Interim Government of National Unity
IMC	-	International Mediation Committee
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
INPEL	-	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
IO	-	International Organization
IPA	-	Interim Political Authority
LCC	-	Liberian Council of Churches
LCCI	-	Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LCD	-	Lesotho Congress of Democracy

LCN	-	Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organizations
LCP	-	Lesotho Congress Party
LDF	-	Lesotho Defence Force
LLA	-	Lesotho Liberation Army
LNCM	-	Lesotho Network for Conflict Management
LNTG	-	Liberian National Transitional Government
LPC	-	Liberian Peace Council
LPF	-	Lesotho Paramilitary Force
MCPMR	-	Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution
MFP	-	Marematlou Freedom Party
MINURCA	-	UN Mission in the Central African Republic
MISAB	-	Mission Inter-Africaine de Surveillance de l'Application des Accords de Bangui
MPLC	-	Central African People's Liberation Party
MRND	-	Mouvement Revolutionnaire National pour le Developpement
NATO	-	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEPAD	-	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGOs	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NIF	-	Neutral International Force
NMCL	-	National Muslim Council of Liberia
NMOG	-	Neutral Military Observer Group
NMOG	-	Neutral Observer Group
NPFL	-	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NRA	-	National Resistance Army
OAU	-	Organization of African Unity
OECD	-	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OMIB	-	Observer Mission in Burundi
PANDA	-	Protocol for the Assessment
PARMEHUTU-		Partie de l'Emancipation du People Hutu
PDD-25	-	Presidential Decision Directive 25
PIOOM	-	Interdisciplinary Research Program on Root Causes of Human Rights Violations

PRC	-	People's Redemption Council
RPA	-	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RPF	-	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RTLMC	-	Radio Television Libre des Milles Collines
RUF	-	Revolutionary United Front
SADC	-	Southern African Development Community
SANDF	-	South African National Defence Force
SMC	-	Standing Mediation Committee
ULIMO	-	United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia
ULIMO-J	-	United Liberian Movement for Democracy in Liberia – Roosevelt Johnson faction
UNAMIR	-	Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda
UNAMSIL	-	UN Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	-	UN High Commission for Refugees
UNHEWS	-	United Nations Humanitarian Early Warning Service
UNOMIL	-	UN Mission in Liberia
UNOMUR	-	United Nations Observer Mission to Uganda-Rwanda
UNPREDEP	-	United Nations Preventive Deployment Force in Macedonia

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Chapter 1

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

Africa is the most violent continent in the world. According to Eriksson, Wallensteen and Sollenberg, in 2001, there were 24 major armed conflicts in 22 locations around the world and Africa continued to be the region with the greatest number of conflicts.¹ In a recent study, Ted Gurr and Monty Marshall noted that beginning from the 1990s there has been a general decline in the global magnitude of armed conflicts, Africa continues to be a continent of concern. According to them “Conflict has declined in eastern and central Africa in the last several years but may be intensifying once again in West Africa. Dysfunctional societies and humanitarian crises remain pervasive throughout the continent.”² In addition, recent global initiatives such as the World Bank’s Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) and the Commission for Africa, have recognized the plight most African countries and the need to prevent the numerous conflicts that afflict them. According to the World Bank:

Weak institutions and governance can condemn these countries to a vicious circle of diminishing international engagement, economic decline, poverty, and dependence on primary commodities—all major risk factors for state breakdown. If the international development community excludes LICUS from the international networks of aid programs, it cuts off financial flows, ideas, technology, and regular contacts with other decisionmakers.³

¹ Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg and Peter Wallensteen, “Appendix A: Patterns of major armed conflicts 1990-2001,” *SIPRI Year Book 2002*, at <http://editors.sipri.se/pubs/yb02/app01a.html>.

² Ted Robert Gurr and Monty G. Marshall, *Peace and Conflict 2003: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy*, University of Maryland: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, February 2003, p. 2.

³ The World Bank Group, *Fragile States: The Low Income Countries Under Stress Initiative*, at www.worldbank.org.

The Commission for Africa, a brain child of the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is also blunt about the plight of Africa:

Africa has experienced more violent conflict than any other continent in the last four decades. In recent years things have improved in many countries, but in other places violent conflict is still the biggest single obstacle to development. Investing in development is investing in peace. The most effective way to tackle conflict – to save both lives and money – is to build the capacity of African states and societies to *prevent and manage conflict*.⁴

Even though prevention of conflicts in Africa is recognized as an urgent policy priority, in reality, not very much has been done. According to *The Economist*, the world will continue to get safer in 2005.⁵ For Africa however, the worst is not over yet. In absolute terms, the number of conflicts has declined but there is continuing instability and on a much bigger scale in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Darfur in Sudan. Clearly, the high hopes and aspirations that heralded the attainment of independence for most African countries have been shattered. Democracy, good governance and the rule of law - necessary ingredients for stability and development, - continue to elude most African nations. From West to East Africa, and from Central to Southern Africa, most states face an ever-growing challenge to peace and stability.

Just like the hopes that greeted the attainment of independence, the end of the Cold War signaled the emergence of a New World order and opened up opportunities for both the UN and regional organizations to play a key role in the management of conflicts. But as Gurr, Marshall and Khosla among others have argued, because of the relatively little

⁴ *Our Common Interest: Report of the Commission for Africa*, p. 12, found at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/11_03_05africa.pdf. Emphasis mine.

⁵ Jean-Marie Guehenno, 'Giving Peace a Chance', *Economist: The World in 2005*, p. 83.

international effort devoted to African conflicts, failed democratic transitions, and acute poverty, Africa has not been part of this post-Cold War dream.⁶

These depressing findings should not, however, hide the positive developments, like in Benin and Ghana, which are probably the two countries on the African continent, together with South Africa, with the highest level of press freedom. In addition to this, the other positive news is that democracy is consolidating in places like Botswana, Benin, Senegal and Mauritius; there have also been peaceful electoral transitions in places like Ghana, Mali and Burkina Faso. The two giants of Africa - South Africa and Nigeria - have also witnessed transition, albeit with still very difficult racial, ethnic and religious problems to resolve.

Even though most of Africa is immersed in violence, there are usually no efforts to anticipate and prevent conflicts; rather, they are managed, mostly on ad hoc bases.⁷ Indeed, there is no denying the fact that while more internal conflicts have occurred in Africa more than in any other place in the world, the continent is becoming increasingly marginalized in the foreign policies of major powers around the world. This is reflected in the kind of treatment that crises in Africa receive as compared to similar or even less violent crises in other parts of the world.

There is thus the urgent need for innovative ways of preventing conflicts in Africa since the “custodian of conflict prevention” - the international community - has since the end of the Cold War engaged itself in conflicts in Africa only at times when crises are

⁶ Gurr et al., p. 11.

⁷ In 1990, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had to put together an intervention force, ECOMOG, to go into Liberia when the international community failed to intervene 6 months after conflict broke out in Liberia. In 1994, the international community failed the people of Rwanda and the result is the much-talked about genocide that ensued. Conflict broke out in Sierra Leone in 1991 but the international community did not get involved until late 1999 when the conflict had already

already out of control. To be sure, regional and sub-regional organizations in Africa have demonstrated some willingness and capacity to intervene to prevent conflicts in Africa since the end of the Cold War – the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Lesotho; and the African Union in a variety of efforts, to mention just a few. This research is guided by the thinking that if the role of these regional organizations is properly harnessed, they can play an even greater role in preventing conflicts in Africa.

This chapter forms the foundation for the analysis that follows. The first part defines conflict while the second part comprises the research questions that will guide the entire analysis. The third part discusses the methodology to be adopted. The fourth section examines the debate about intervention since this is key to enhancing our understanding of why preventive action is or is not taken. In the fifth section, the variables to be considered in this study will be discussed. The sixth section lists the hypotheses that will be evaluated, whilst the last section justifies the selection of the cases for analysis.

1. Understanding Conflict

According to Galtung, conflict is generally defined as an interaction between interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals and who expect interference from the other party if they attempt to achieve their goal. Conflict can be viewed as a triangle with structure, attitudes, and behavior as its vertices.⁸ By structure, he means the conflict situation, the parties, and the conflict of interest among them. Conflict arises

taken its toll on the people of Sierra Leone. These three instances do not constitute isolated cases – the same can be said of most conflicts in Africa.

when the parties come to have incompatible interests, values or goals. He uses the term attitudes to refer to the tendency for the parties to see conflict from their own point of view, to identify with their own side, and to diminish the concerns of others. Behavior includes gestures and communications, which can convey either a hostile or a conciliatory intent.

When a conflict turns into open combat with at least 25 battle related deaths per year, then it is described as armed conflict. According to Wallensteen and Sollenberg, “an *armed conflict* is a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.”⁹ Intra-state conflict, the focus of this thesis, is the dominant form of conflict in the world in general and Africa in particular. I define it as a situation in which there is armed military hostility between the state and group(s), mostly organized. Such conflicts usually take the form of “irregular warfare” in which civilians, instead of professional soldiers, suffer the majority of casualties, at least one thousand deaths a year.

Conflict is dynamic, with a life cycle that generally evolves through five stages: pre-violence, escalation, peak, de-escalation, and transformation or post-violence.¹⁰ The pre-violence stage is characterized by underlying conditions of stress due to various factors

⁸ Johan Galtung, *Peace By Peaceful Means*, London: SAGE, 1996, pp. 71-72.

⁹ Peter Wallensteen & Margareta Sollenberg, “Armed Conflict 1989-2000”, *Journal of Peace Research* 38(5): 629-644.

¹⁰ Stephen Ryan, “United Nations Peacekeeping: A Matter of Principles?”, *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 7, Spring 2000, pp. 34-41. For other forms of classifications of the phases of conflict, see David Carment and Patrick James, “Ethnic Conflict at the International Level: Causation, Prevention, and Peacekeeping” in David Carment and Patrick James, eds., *Peace in the Midst of Wars: Preventing and Managing International Ethnic Conflicts*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998, p. 8; Chandra Lekha Sriram with Karin Wermester, “From Risk to Response: Phases of Conflict, Phases of Conflict Prevention” in Chandra Lekham Sriram and Karin Wermester, eds., *From Promise to Practice: Strengthening UN Capacities for the Prevention of Violent Conflict*, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2003, pp. 21-29.

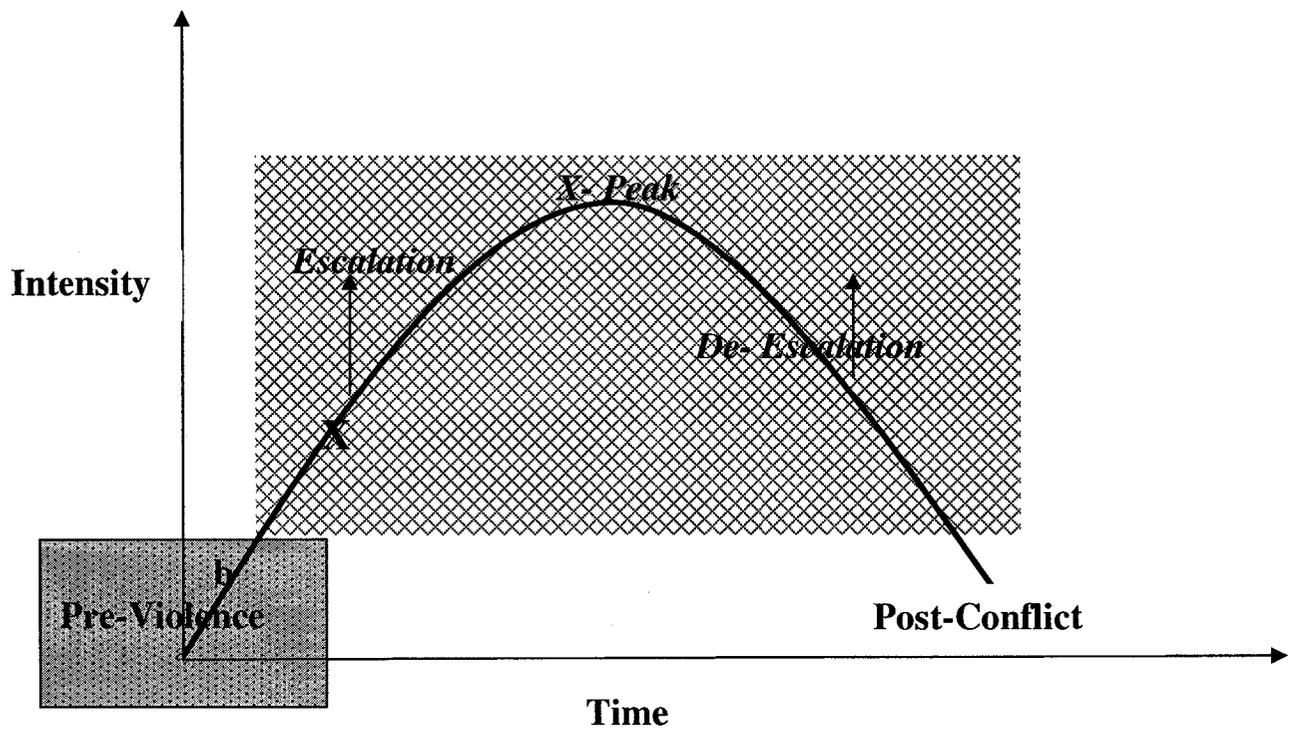
that give rise to conflict – these could include, but not limited to, weak state structures and institutions, poor governance, ethnic and religious differences, and unequal distribution of resources. At this stage, there is generally no violence, but conditions are ripe enough and need only a trigger to usher in violence.

With a trigger, the conflict moves to the next phase – escalation. This phase is characterized by high tensions and the use of armed violence by the various factions to the conflict to resolve their differences. This usually leads to casualties and displacements of populations, as well as humanitarian emergencies. The peak or endurance stage of the conflict cycle is a rapid progression from the escalation stage. By this stage, the various factions have usually taken a hardened position. There is intense armed violence and huge numbers of casualties. There is mostly some form of external intervention (usually peace-enforcement) at this stage because of the humanitarian catastrophe characteristic of this stage which is usually broadcast on television around the world. With this kind of intervention and some negotiation, the conflict then begins to de-escalate. The final phase of the conflict cycle is post-violence. Here efforts are usually concentrated on building peace, reconstruction and post-conflict transformation.

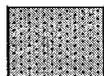
The usual approach is for both international and local actors to act beyond the pre-violence stage of conflict, “action after not before the fact.” In fact, international and domestic actors usually engage themselves in the very difficult task of managing crises instead of the relatively easier task of anticipating and preventing these crises. Thus this thesis is about conflict prevention. Its focus is primarily on the pre-violence stage of the conflict cycle and on how and what can be done before a conflict situation escalates into violence.

Even as conflict is dynamic with five different stages, this thesis is concerned with the first stage of conflict – the pre-violence stage. This is because, as I will indicate later in the discussion, any action beyond the pre-violence stage is crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction. This thesis is concerned with conflict prevention, understood as simply stopping violence before it starts.

Figure 1.1
CONFLICT INTERVENTION CURVE



Key



- **Conflict Prevention**



- **Crisis Management**

Figure 1 graphically represents the typical life cycle of a conflict – from pre-violence to transformation. The figure represents the progression of conflict in two dimensions: (1) the intensity of the conflict (y-axis), measured by the level of hostility and the number of deaths; and (2) the evolution of the conflict over time (x-axis). The effect of the combination of the two axes produces the bell-shaped curve.

The small box (marked black) depicting the pre-violence stage, represents the stage during the life cycle of a conflict when prevention is possible. At this stage, with the right warning signals, good timing and the right tools, it should be possible to influence the various parties to a conflict, and in fact prevent conflict through a negotiated political, economic, social and structural settlement instead of through violence. The bigger box represents crisis management, which includes anything from peacekeeping and relief work, to peace enforcement and peacemaking. Beyond the bigger box, at the transformation stage of the conflict cycle, the strategies that work are peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. This is summarized in the table below.

Table 1.1: Stages of Conflict and Strategies

Stage of Conflict	Strategy
Pre-violence	Conflict prevention
Escalation	Crisis/humanitarian intervention
Endurance	Peacemaking and relief work
De-escalation	Peacemaking and 'traditional peacekeeping
Post-violence	Peacebuilding/transformation ¹

Within our conflict prevention box in figure 1 above, points A and B represent a time continuum. It is easier to prevent conflict at point A and the level of difficulty increases as the conflict progresses from point A to point B. How long the progression from A to

B lasts is not possible to determine. Again, within the box, the concern is short to medium action, either diplomatic or political, that can prevent the eruption of violence. Without doubt, this is appropriate but not good enough to remove the underlying causes of violence. Thus, such short-term action must be complemented with other actions that are aimed at improving and ultimately addressing the root causes of violence. As I will indicate later in the discussion, when I examine the various tools and strategies for preventing conflict, there is no one single strategy that can do the job – each strategy has to be complemented by other strategies.

The key problem with trying to prevent conflict at the pre-violence stage is the fact the situation does not make *news* and hence does not attract the attention of television cameras and, by implication, does not attract the attention of the “actors that matter” at the international level. Today, even when “people are dying”, it is difficult to mobilize the political will necessary “to do something.” The crucial question then is “what can be done to make news out of such a situation, mobilize the necessary political will and get resources committed to preventive action”? The answer to this question forms the core of this study, since getting actors to act constructively at this stage will determine whether or not prevention can be made a favored policy choice at the international level – the central question of this thesis.

Given that there are usually abundant early warning signals about a looming crisis, reducing the *response* time to minimum possible becomes critical at the pre-violence stage. As noted earlier, it is relatively easier at this stage to influence the various parties to the conflict and get them to negotiate a political settlement. This is where our first

¹¹ Stephen Ryan, “United Nations Peacekeeping: A Matter of Principle?” *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 7, Spring 2000, p. 34.

hypothesis (discussed below) becomes relevant. If, instead of the usual over-reliance on the international community, there is more collaboration between African actors (regional and sub-regional organizations) and the international community, the *warning-response* gap could be bridged, and conflicts could be prevented. For one thing, it becomes less risky for international actors if there is a division of labour whereby they provide the necessary resources and the African actors mount the intervention. In fact, there is a norm that is slowly developing in recent United Nations interventions – the UN provides the resources and Third World armies do the job. This was the case in Sierra Leone and in the current skeleton UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

At its summit in Cairo in the summer of 1993, the OAU established a permanent Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (MCPMR) that is supposed to be the institutional watch-dog for preventive diplomacy on the continent. The OAU has since been putting together the necessary infrastructure and resources in order to facilitate the preventive mandate of MCPMR.¹² Similarly, in 1997, ECOWAS leaders, meeting in Lome, Togo, decided to establish a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Security. A document to this effect was drafted in July 1998 and was endorsed by Heads of State and Government at their summit in Abuja in August 1998.¹³

Given the existence of conflict prevention mechanisms such as those described above, a window of opportunity exists for the UN and the international community to strengthen the capacity of such mechanisms; with a strong collaboration, there could be some

¹² See for example, Njunga Michael Mulikita, "Regional Organizations and Conflict Prevention: The Case of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)," Unpublished manuscript.

¹³ See Joses Gani Yoroms, "Mechanisms For Conflict Management In ECOWAS," ACCORD Occasional Paper 8/1999, at <http://www.accord.org.za/publications/papers/99-8.htm>, Accessed April 3, 2001.

advancement in the area of conflict prevention on the continent. Since the establishment of the OAU's MCMPR, a number of initiatives, albeit not all successful, have been undertaken in the area of prevention. These include the Neutral Observer Group (NMOG) in Rwanda in 1994, the Observer Mission in Burundi (OMIB) following the Arusha Accords, as well as the Mechanism's support of initiatives by sub-regional groups in Liberia and the Central African Republic.¹⁴

The early involvement of African actors, once they have the capacity, can create "news" when a conflict is still at its pre-violent stage. This is especially so if African eminent persons like Nelson Mandela engage in shuttle diplomacy to potential trouble spots. This can prompt the attention of the international community and, with the existence of a strong collaboration between the UN/international community and African regional and sub-regional organizations, early action can be brought to bear on a deteriorating situation. This could be one reliable way of bridging the *warning-response* gap.

To be sure, just creating news out of such situations is not enough to get policy makers to act unless, in addition, the problem of the political will to act is overcome. From a practical and practitioner's point of view, Gareth Evans recently put together a number of proposals to this effect. In making a case for finding good arguments that appeal to key individuals at the top of the food chains, Evans noted that the well-equipped political-will-mobiliser needs to be armed with certain key arguments in favour of preventive action. First is the ability to convey a sense of urgency and reality about the threat to human security – the *moral argument*. Second is the *financial argument* – always cheaper to act early than late. Next is to be able to convince those at the top that the

¹⁴ Mulikita, "Regional Organizations and Conflict Prevention."

national interest, as defined in security and economic terms, is promoted through preventive action, for instance by avoiding the disintegration of states with its consequent refugee flows and the disruption of trade routes. Last is the *domestic politics argument* – making arguments that will appeal to and not alienate the domestic population.¹⁵ With a clear understanding of conflict, I now turn to the research questions that will guide this study.

II. Research Questions

During the past couple of decades, there has emerged a large body of literature devoted to the study of conflict. A lot of efforts have been put into understanding, managing and resolving conflicts since the end of World War II, but preventing conflicts continues to elude academics and policymakers. Indeed, even critics of conflict prevention cannot but agree that it is more cost-effective to prevent conflict than acting after the fact, yet developing a preventing culture seems to be very difficult. Given that, once conflict starts, it is like letting the genie out of the bottle and managing it becomes difficult, and given that conflicts continue to be pervasive in Africa, the need for developing a preventive culture becomes even more important.

From the literature on conflict prevention, the key puzzle that remains unsolved is how to bridge the *warning-response* gap. This is mainly due to the lack of political will/economic interest to act, which is occasioned by the nature of the post-Cold War international environment; an environment in which most major powers with the capacity

¹⁵ Gareth Evans, “Preventing Deadly Conflict: The Role and Responsibility of Governments and NGOs,” Public Lecture for the Centre for Study of Human Rights, London School of Economics, 2 February 2001, at <http://www.garethevans.dynamite.com.au/speechtexts/LSElecture2Feb01.htm>, Accessed, March 23, 2001. For similar arguments see, Bruce W. Jentleson, “The Realism of Preventive Statecraft,” in David

to act have become casualty-sensitive. Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo all point to this emerging trend, where major powers continue to turn their back on crisis situations in Africa. There is thus the need for a study such as this one, to devote attention to examining effective ways of preventing conflicts in Africa.

The study will investigate questions such as the following: What is the most effective way to bridge the warning-response gap? What is the most efficient method of mobilizing the much needed 'political will' to prevent conflict? Why has it been difficult to prevent conflicts in Africa? Specifically, the central question of this thesis is: *How can preventive action be made a favored policy choice towards the handling of conflicts in Africa - a continent that carries the largest burden of conflict?* It is hoped that answers to this question will help direct the attention of policy makers to how to act preventively in Africa to stop conflicts before they start.

III. Methodology

This research is aimed at producing recommendations that will guide policy makers in the difficult task of preventing conflicts in Africa; thus the perspective of the project is primarily policy-oriented. And to arrive at policy recommendations, the methods to be used consist of critical analysis and synthesis of existing theories. The study takes early warning and the application of the right tools and strategies at the appropriate time and level of conflict as its two broad independent variables. Conflict prevention is taken as the dependent variable. From a theoretical standpoint, such a methodological choice will

Carment and Albrecht Schnabel, *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2003.

reduce the usual wide gap between early warning and the response that follows the warning signals. This problem has been pointed out by George and Holl who argue that while the problem of obtaining early warning has received a great deal of attention in recent times, that of marshalling timely and effective responses has not received systematic attention.¹⁶ This study will directly link early warning and timely intervention at the pre-violence stage of conflicts, to prevention. It will seek to investigate the impact of acting appropriately and early, on the outcome of a conflict.

The methodological approach adopted in this study is the comparative method using the “most similar systems” research design. In this regard, the “concomitant variation”¹⁷ strategy will be adopted. This strategy, according to Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, is generally based on the assumption that systems that are as similar as possible with respect to many features that constitute the optimal samples for comparative inquiry. The study includes two sets of cases: failed and (qualified) successful cases of prevention.¹⁸ The first set - failed cases - are Rwanda and Liberia/Sierra Leone whilst the second set - (qualified) successful cases - are Lesotho and the Central African Republic. Whilst these cases differ in terms of outcome, they are similar in many respects. They are all small African countries and emerged from the shackles of colonialism in the early 1960s with

¹⁶ Alexander L. George and Jane E. Holl, “The Warning-Response Problem and Missed Opportunities in Preventive Diplomacy,” in Bruce W. Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized: Preventive Diplomacy in the Post-Cold War World*, Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, p. 21.

¹⁷ Raoul Naroll, “Some Thoughts on Comparative Method in Cultural Anthropology,” in H. M. Blalock and Ann Blalock, eds., *Methodology in Social Research*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968, cited in Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*, New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1970, p. 32.

¹⁸ I define “failed prevention” as a situation in which there was abundant warning but not sufficient and timely effort to stop the escalation of the conflict. In such a situation, there is both diplomatic and military action but at a time when the conflict has moved beyond the pre-violence stage. The result is usually a humanitarian catastrophe which results in the loss of lives and property in the country concerned. “Qualified successful prevention” is defined as a situation in which efforts were made to respond to warning signals. Such efforts – political and military succeed in preventing the escalation of violence but

similar economic and political systems. In addition, they are all less developed and share similar socio-cultural characteristics, with at least two or more ethnic groups.

If these cases are so similar, yet different in terms of how conflict evolved in them, the number of factors responsible for this difference “will be sufficiently small to warrant explanation in terms of those differences alone.”¹⁹ Such an approach will help provide an explanation for why prevention has been ‘successful’ in certain instances and ‘failed’ in others. Against this background, the framework for analysis will follow Alexander George’s method of “structure, focused comparison” which makes it possible to deal with only certain aspects of a small number of cases by evaluating a small number of variables.²⁰ Guided by this method, the study examines four case studies within a certain time frame. Most importantly, the study focuses only on what happened during the pre-violence stage of the various conflicts. A set of standardized questions will be employed to guide the analysis of the cases to be studied in this thesis and the questions will be focused – dealing selectively with only some aspects of the cases.

The objective is not to develop a ‘grand theory’ of conflict prevention. Rather, it is to extend existing theories and develop corollary theories. The comparative method adopted will rather provide an explanation for why it was possible to bridge the gap between warning and response in certain cases and not in others. It is therefore hoped that the findings from this small number of cases will help unravel the *warning-response* puzzle.

not without some casualties. The base line for the distinction between success and failure is whether the conflict was contained within the initial stage without violence.

¹⁹ Przeworski and Teune, p. 32.

²⁰ See Alexander L. George, “Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison,” in Paul Gordon Lauren, ed., *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, New York: The Free Press, 1979, pp. 61-62.

The study will rely on a number of primary sources of data - United Nations and government documents. It should be noted, however, that most of the study will be based on secondary sources. There are a number of excellent sources on conflict prevention and conflicts in Africa,²¹ as well as the warning-response gap.²² These can make a very significant contribution to the discussion in this study. Reliance on secondary sources does not constitute a weakness of this study. The approach adopted makes the study original – providing novel ways as well as giving a new theoretical insight to conflict prevention – a phenomenon that seems to be the ‘flavour of the turn of the century.’

²¹ See for example, Francis Deng and I. William Zartman, eds., *Conflict Resolution in Africa*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1991; I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989; I. William Zartman, ed., *Governance as Conflict Management: Politics and Violence in West Africa*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1997; I. William Zartman, ed., *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1995; Bruce W. Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized: Preventive Diplomacy in the Post-Cold War World*, Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000; Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Vigilance and Vengeance: NGOs Preventing Ethnic Conflict in Divided Societies*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1996; Michael E. Brown, ed. *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993; Klaas van Walraven, *The Pretence of Peace-keeping: ECOMOG, West Africa and Liberia (1990-1998)*, The Hague: Clingendel, 1999; Adekeye Adebajo, *Liberia's Civil War*, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2002; Bruce Jones, *Peacemaking In Rwanda: The Dynamics of Failure*, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2001; Mats Berdal and David M. Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2000; Chandra L. Sriram and Adekeye Adebajo, eds., *Managing Armed Conflicts in the 21st Century*, London: Frank Cass, 2001; Mwesiga Baregu and Christopher Landsberg, eds., *From Cape to Congo: Southern Africa's Evolving Security Challenges*, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2002.

²² See for example, Alexander L. George and Jane E. Holl, *The Warning-Response Problem and Missed Opportunities in Preventive Diplomacy: A Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict*, New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1997; Fen Osler Hampson and David M. Malone, eds., *From Reaction to Conflict Prevention: Opportunities for the UN System*, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2002; David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel, eds., *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2003; Chandra L. Sriram and Karen Wermester, eds., *From Promise to Practice: Strengthening UN Capacities for the Prevention of Violent Conflict*, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2003; Janie Leatherman et al., *Breaking Cycles of Violence: Conflict Prevention in Intrastate Crises*, West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1999; Michael Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, Washington, D.C.: USIP Press, 1996; Kevin M. Cahill, ed., *Preventive Diplomacy: Stopping Wars Before They Start*, New York: Basic Books, 1996; John L. Davies and Ted R. Gurr, eds., *Preventive Measures: Building Risk Assessment and Crisis Early Warning Systems*, Lanham and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998; Klaas van Walraven, ed., *Early Warning and Conflict Prevention: Limitations and Possibilities*, The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1998.

IV. Understanding Intervention

Conflict prevention frequently involves intervention since it often requires the involvement of third parties. However, it is important to note that, even though conflict prevention frequently involves third parties, it is not an activity that is limited to third parties – it can also include a variety of domestic actors (governments and policy makers), so there can also be a very important role for people who are directly affected by the conflict. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this study, the central focus will be on intervention by regional organizations, the United Nations and the international community.²³ Thus, understanding why and under what condition third parties choose to or not to intervene in internal conflicts is crucial to our ability to predict how conflicts can be prevented.

The literature on intervention in internal conflicts is clouded with a number of problems which obscure the meaning of intervention. Patrick Regan identifies three such problems. He argues that “ (1) interventions were generally conceived of in solely military terms when in the modern world this is clearly insufficient; (2) very little research focuses exclusively on intrastate conflicts, which represents a unique and growing concern; and (3) there is little systematic evidence to support many of the prescriptive arguments put forth.”²⁴

For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to clearly define and understand the term “intervention.” Many scholars have made an effort to clarify this conceptual problem. Patrick Regan, for example, examines intervention from conceptual and operational

²³ The international community here is taken to mean major powers/organizations who have the capacity to intervene to prevent the escalation of violence.

²⁴ Patrick M. Regan, “Choosing to Intervene: Outside Interventions in Internal Conflicts,” *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 60, no. 3, 1998, pp. 754-79, 755.

perspectives. He defines an intervention, conceptually, as a situation where one state uses its resources (military and economic) to influence the internal conflict of another state. Operationally, he borrows from Rosneau (1968), who distinguishes intervention from influence based on the argument that interventions are convention-breaking and authority-targeted.²⁵ Regan also distinguishes between unilateral and multilateral interventions. This is strictly based on the number of actors. Oran Young provides a more general definition of intervention as “[A]ny action taken by an actor that is not a direct party to the crisis, that is designed to reduce or remove one or more of the problems of the bargaining relationship and, therefore, to facilitate the termination of the crisis itself.”²⁶

Since the end of the Cold War, the ever rising tide of internal conflicts has brought to the fore a new form of intervention - one not defined strictly in military terms and one not strictly grounded in the realists’ sovereignty and national interest argument - but one that is “people-centered.” As I will explain later in the discussion, it is becoming increasingly clear that intervention to save the state leaves millions of innocent civilians at the mercy of warlords and guerilla movements who continue to make the general population their prime target. Indeed this is a radical shift from the centuries old international relations/international law theory that was grounded on the premise that the internal affairs of a state are strictly out of bounds to outside actors.

This new form of intervention is humanitarian intervention. Hass describes it as “the notion that outside parties have the right or even obligation to intervene to help peoples

²⁵ Patrick M. Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers: Outside Intervention in Intra-state Conflict*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000, p. 9.

²⁶ Oran R. Young, *The Intermediaries: Third Parties in International Crises*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 34.

vis-à-vis their own governments or one another.”²⁷ This form of intervention is premised on morality – the fact that the world community has a duty to help members of the community who are under threat of losing their lives as a result of war. Given the nature of conflicts these days - mostly internal - humanitarian intervention has become the most common form of intervention. It is also a very risky business, leading most countries, especially the ‘big powers’, to shy away from it.

In determining whether or not to undertake humanitarian intervention, governments give serious consideration to the both the military and political implications of their actions. Regan has noted that, in contemplating intervention, policymakers must ask three basic questions: “(1) how likely is it that the intervention will alter the course of the conflict? (2) will there be support from their international and domestic constituencies? and (3) what strategy for intervention is best suited to the particular conflict?”²⁸

These three conditions identified by Regan set a very high standard that is not likely to be often met in interventions. First, most internal conflicts tend to be protracted and complex, making it difficult for interventions to alter the course of conflicts (reduction or cessation of hostilities) without cost to the intervener. Second, while there might be international support, domestic support for intervention has been waning since Somalia and the end of the Cold War. Recognizing the importance of domestic support, Carment et al., for instance, argue that a necessary condition for intervention is a strong ethnic affinity between the citizens in the warring country and those in a potential intervening

²⁷ Richard N. Haas, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World*, Washington D. C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1994, p. 12.

²⁸ Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers*, p. 5.

country.²⁹ It should be noted that such a condition has a lot of limitations when it comes to interventions by regional organizations, where there is always the tendency for some of the factions to a conflict to suspect the existence of bias.

A combination of these and other problems has led advocates of the “human-centered” approach to international relations to endorse what has become known as the “Annan Doctrine” – which calls for UN intervention in a nation’s affairs when populations are threatened. Former Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy is one of the key advocates of the “Annan Doctrine.” In the fall of 2000, Axworthy introduced to the Security Council of the UN, a Canadian initiative aimed at studying In introducing the initiative, Axworthy argued that “Where states are unable, or unwilling, to protect their citizens, the UN – and in particular the Security Council – has a special responsibility to act.”³⁰ Axworthy’s initiative led to the creation of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). The Commission solicited views from governments, NGOs, and academics from around the world and eventually prepared and published a report. The central theme of the report is the idea that sovereign states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens from avoidable catastrophe, but that when they are unwilling or unable to do so, that responsibility must be borne by the broader international community of states.³¹ It remains to be seen whether member countries, especially the ‘big powers’, will pay heed to ICISS’ recommendations.

²⁹ David Carment, Dane Rowlands, and Patrick James, “Ethnic Conflict and Third Party Intervention: Riskiness, Rationality and Commitment,” in Gerald Schneider and Patricia Weitsman, eds., *Enforcing Cooperation*, London: Macmillan, 1997, pp. 104-31.

³⁰ See “Axworthy leads study of UN intervention: Council should step in when people are threatened, minister declares,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, Friday, September 15, 2000, p. A10.

³¹ See *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*, Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, December, 2001.

It is important to note that, for the purpose of this study, a distinction is made between humanitarian intervention to prevent mounting hostilities, where the stakes as well as the risks are high, and intervening to prevent conflict, which is less risky and less costly. Even with its low risk, there are many that do not subscribe to intervening to prevent conflicts. According to Jentleson, “One of the most oft-heard criticisms of conflict prevention is that it is unrealistic.”³² Even as they do not dispute the desirability of preventing genocide and other forms of armed conflicts, realists argue that most current internal conflicts are “just the playing out of history” in the Balkans and in Africa. Instead of preventive action, they therefore advocate a “wait and see” attitude.³³ Jentleson confronts the critics, making a case for the *realism* of prevention and noting that prevention is “a viable strategy and can be done, and that it has a strategic logic and should be done.”³⁴ One thing that needs to be borne in mind is the fact that, in most cases, the effects of some of these conflicts, even if they are about settling historical animosities, go far beyond the borders of the countries involved. In a recent World Bank study on the effects of civil wars on development, Paul Collier and his colleagues found that, in the past 30 years, three major global social evils – drug production and trafficking, HIV/AIDS, and international terrorism – can be ascribed in substantial part to the side effects of civil war.³⁵

While opponents of intervention, especially realists, defend their stance by relying on sovereignty and the oft-cited ‘national interest’ argument, proponents rely on a mix of

³² Bruce W. Jentleson, “The Realism of Preventive Statecraft,” in David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel, eds., *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2003, pp. 26-46.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Paul Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2003, pp. 41-49.

moral and pragmatic arguments.³⁶ The American debacle in Somalia in 1993, dubbed the “Mogadishu Syndrome”, which has come to be synonymous with reluctance to intervene, not only stunted the appetite for intervention in Washington, but also other major Western capitals. Thus, given that big powers are of late very reluctant to risk the lives of their soldiers in internal conflicts in Africa, this project makes a strong case for strong regional organizations to play a leading role in conflict prevention in Africa.

According to Hoffman, critics of intervention conceive of sovereignty as a protection of a society’s individuals and groups from external control. Indeed, “the sovereign state is seen as the protector of the security and property of its subjects, as in Hobbes’ *Leviathan*; or the guardian of their rights, as in Locke and Mill; or the expression of their collective will, as in Rousseau.”³⁷ Even under situations in which the state fails in its sovereign duties, intervention is still seen as a greater evil.³⁸ This is the classical realist perspective. Realists also warn that, instead of insulating the causes of turmoil, interventions amplify them. For the realists, moderation or restraint is the solution.³⁹ One can argue that, during the Cold War, this realist view was very much upheld and unbreachable but today, ‘a new norm has developed favoring the rights of individuals to peace and security.’⁴⁰ Here, state sovereignty is equated to state responsibility and the focus is human and not state security. This norm is akin to the ‘human security’ agenda that is espoused by middle powers such as Canada. What it means is that if a state is not

³⁶ See for example, Stanley Hoffmann, “The Politics and Ethics of Military Intervention,” *Survival*, vol. 37, winter 1995-96, pp. 29-51.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Cyrus R. Vance, “Forward,” in Melanie C. Greenberg et al., eds., *Words Over War: Mediation and Arbitration to Prevent Deadly Conflict*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, p. xiii.

responsible to its citizens, the international community, *if willing*, can intervene on moral and humanitarian grounds to protect the rights to innocent civilians.

Those who espouse liberalism and its tenets - protection of the freedom of citizens, reduction of state power, and the legitimacy of power based on consent and respect for the rights of citizens - make a strong case for intervention contrary to the realist view. If, as it is the case, most African states have failed in their sovereign responsibilities and abuse the rights of their citizens, then intervention is justified in the name of protecting the citizens of such states.⁴¹ Even though liberals favor intervention, they denounce the use of force to export such liberal goods as self-government and self-determination. This has led prominent liberals such as Michael Walzer to find a middle ground.⁴² Walzer is of the view that intervention is justified only when its aim is to put a stop to actions that, to use an old-fashioned but accurate phrase, shock the conscience of humankind.⁴³ To this argument, Walzer adds that “all states have an interest in global stability and even in global humanity,” and for the big powers such an interest is seconded by obligation.⁴⁴ Thus, the thrust of the liberal argument is about bringing order to a chaotic world.

In countries that experience turmoil in Africa today, what we are dealing with are situations in which bands of rebels disturb domestic, and in fact regional, order. In the process, they commit acts that ‘shock the conscience of humankind’ – the genocide in Rwanda and the recent events in Sierra Leone where a large number of people have lost their arms and legs are illustrative. Today, there is nothing more important for the people of Africa than mechanisms that can stop conflicts before they turn violent. History tells

⁴¹ For information on human rights abuses in Africa, which are prevalent, see Human Rights Watch at www.hrw.com. See also Polity IV data sets on civil and political rights in Africa at www.umd.edu

⁴² Hoffmann, “The Politics and ethics of Intervention”, p. 34.

⁴³ Michael Walzer, “The Politics of Rescue,” *Social Research*, vol. 62, No. 1 (Spring 1995), p. 55

us that reacting to these senseless wars has not been helpful to the people of Africa. As Walzer has rightly argued

.... it isn't enough to wait until the tyrants, the zealots, and the bigots have done their filthy work and then rush food and medicine to the ragged survivors. Whenever the filthy work can be stopped, it should be stopped. And if not by us, the supposedly decent people of this world, then by whom?⁴⁵

Such a liberal argument places the moral responsibility of preventing conflicts on the 'big powers' who possess the military might and the economic means of stopping conflicts before they turn violent. It is apparent, however, that such a moral argument has no place in today's international environment. Brown and Rosecrance have noted that

One might like to think that well-meaning people around the world will be motivated to act when human suffering is intense, when important moral principles are being trampled, and when crimes against humanity are being committed. Sadly, humanitarian impulses and moral motivations are often insufficient, as we have seen in Bosnia, Iraq, Liberia, Rwanda, Sudan, and many other places.⁴⁶

Thus, since peace is *more of politics than morality*, any moral argument should also take into consideration the interests of states and how such interests may be better directed towards preventive action. As Allison and Owada have argued, in imaging conflict prevention in Africa, a 'realist' might begin with, for instance, France's traditional willingness, albeit a declining one, to intervene in Francophone Africa and examine the possibility of harnessing such an interest within some more legitimizing framework.⁴⁷ So might be the 'limited' interest of Britain to intervene in Anglophone

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 66.

⁴⁶ Michael E. Brown and Richard N. Rosecrance, "Comparing Costs of Prevention and Costs of Conflict: Toward a New Methodology," Michael E. Brown and Richard N. Rosecrance, eds., *The Costs of Conflict: Prevention and Cure in the Global Arena*, Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Little, 1999, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Graham Allison and Hisashi Owada, "The Responsibilities of Democracies in Preventing Deadly Conflict," *Discussion Paper*, Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, <http://www.ccpdc.org/pubs/democ/democ.htm> Accessed: 4/4/00.

Africa, as demonstrated by her recent involvement in Sierra Leone, where most Western countries have clearly indicated their unwillingness to send any ground troops, an action some analysts will classify as an endorsement by the 'big powers' of the 'moral standards of the perpetrators' of violence.⁴⁸ For instance, most Liberians perceived the United States' lack of intervention during the early stages of the Liberian crisis in 1990 as an action that emboldened Charles Taylor to push ahead with his rebellion to remove Samuel Doe. The next section of the study examines that various variables to be used in this study.

V. Independent and Dependent Variables

(a) Dependent Variable: Prevention

This study focuses on how prevention can be a favored policy choice towards the handling of conflicts in Africa. Prevention is the outcome of the study and is thus taken to be the dependent variable.

This study is concerned with how armed violence can be eliminated from societies since conflict *per se* is not a bad thing and need not necessarily be prevented but used as a vehicle for change for the good of society. What has to be prevented is the violent aspect of conflict, which has plagued many societies around the world, especially in Africa where many states have been driven into anarchy. The targets of preventive action include states, warlords and their rebel organizations as well as ethnic and religious groups. Prevention can be initiated by multiple actors: states, international organizations

⁴⁸ Barbara Harff, "Rescuing Endangered Peoples: Missed Opportunities," *Social Research*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (spring 1995): 29.

(economic and political), regional and sub-regional organizations, NGOs and local civil society organizations.⁴⁹ Accordingly, prevention can either be “bottom up” or “top down”. “Bottom up” prevention, as the name implies, is when local initiatives are undertaken to reconcile hostile groups by establishing communication channels between them and fostering mutual dialogue. The “top down” strategy, on the other hand, is usually initiated by states and organizations (IOs and NGOs for instance) and relies on traditional tools of diplomacy - political, economic and military - to prevent the escalation of violence.⁵⁰

Conflict prevention has been defined in various ways in the literature. In general, most of these definitions focus on (a) either short-term political actions to de-escalate a tense situation, or (b) institutional arrangements to share power or economic and social structural reforms.⁵¹ The first type of prevention is operational whilst the second is structural.

Operational prevention is action that is taken when there is an imminent danger, at a time when conflict is at the onset threshold. At this stage, there is a looming catastrophe and very effective measures are needed if escalation is to be prevented. This is a critical stage for actors involved in conflict because, once escalation sets in, the ‘genie is out of the bottle.’ The actors must be committed and effective in their approach because of the delicate nature of the situation. Ideally, the most effective actors will be those close to the conflict – in the case of Africa, countries in the various sub-regions. The international community is also a critical actor at this stage because of the resources that

⁴⁹ Seyom Brown, *The Causes and Prevention of War*, 2d ed., New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994, p. 236.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Janie Leatherman et. al, *Breaking Cycles of Violence: Conflict Prevention in Intrastate Crises*, West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1999, p. 96.

can be brought to bear on the situation. Regrettably, both local and international actors do not always act the way they should. The latter because of lack of interest and political will and the former because of lack of resources and a history of mistrust among countries in various regions of Africa. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) at the early stages of the conflict, where five countries are battling things out, with one group (Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia) supporting the incumbent government whilst the other group (Uganda and Rwanda) supports the rebels, is a clear case in point.

Unlike operational prevention, structural prevention targets the root causes of conflict with the aim of making sure that conflict does not occur in the first place. This involves addressing structural conditions in societies, for instance providing people with basic human needs - economic and social - as well as help with building democracies and the institutions that go with them. According to a 1997 OECD report, these structural conditions include “political, social and economic factors such as population density, the level and distribution of wealth and opportunity, the state of the resource base, the structure and ethnic make-up of society, and the history of inter-group relations.”⁵² Thus, a society with poor economic conditions, bad governance, or high population density, is more likely to be embroiled in conflict than a rich society. In a recent study, Gurr et al. concluded, “Poor societies are at risk of falling into no-exit cycles of conflict in which

⁵² *Development Assistance Committee Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation*, Paris: OECD, 1997, p. 11.

ineffective governance, societal warfare, humanitarian crises, and lack of development perpetually chase one another.”⁵³

Therefore, structural prevention, which must be viewed on a long-term horizon, involves the sum total of efforts undertaken to bring about development by eliminating poverty and improving the political conditions of societies that show signs of instability. This is where the policies of international economic organizations, bilateral and multilateral donors, development-oriented NGOs become helpful.

While some of these definitions are useful in giving direction to preventive efforts, they are too broad for a study such as this one. This thesis adopts a focused definition of conflict prevention – one that is concerned with the *pre-violence* stage of the conflict cycle. This means that both the operational and structural approaches to defining prevention are not very focused. Operational prevention comes into effect only when crisis is imminent - at which time conflict has moved beyond pre-violence, - while structural prevention encompasses actions taken to reverse the tide of violence by removing its causes. Prevention here is seen as action that is taken to prevent the emergence of violence, while at the same time ensuring that the root causes are removed. This definition therefore leans more towards structural prevention, but adds a focus on violence avoidance.

⁵³ Ted Robert Gurr, Monty G. Marshall and Deepa Khosla, *Peace and Conflict 2001: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy*, University of Maryland: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 2000, p. 13.

Conflict prevention is not a new phenomenon,⁵⁴ but the post-Cold War era, because of the absence of superpower competition, provides opportunities, especially in Africa, for acting preventively. During the Cold War, structural defects in international cooperation have been blamed for the lack of efforts to stop wars before they escalated.⁵⁵ Thus, the retreat of the superpowers from Africa is seen to have created the space for regional and international actors to take on the challenge of maintaining peace and security. Michael Barnett has noted that during the Cold War most regional organizations were imprinted by superpower competition but since its demise many regional organizations are capitalizing on the power vacuum, first and foremost, to create new mechanisms to foster regional security.⁵⁶ Allied to this is the fact that in Africa today the politics of traditional statecraft, which since the early 60s found expression in the Charter of the OAU, now African Union (AU), which upholds state sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of member states, have clearly disappeared with the Cold War.

It is thus possible, today, for early actions to be taken to identify impending intra-state disputes and deal with them before they escalate into crises. This is because, in today's international environment, collective security action is possible and, to some extent, the task of dealing with some of these conflicts has been 'bequeathed' to international actors

⁵⁴ Writers on preventive diplomacy such as Michael Lund argue that the notion of conflict prevention is not new since history, especially that of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is replete with examples of efforts to discourage the use of force as a means of dealing with international disputes. In spite of the fact that the basic idea of conflict prevention is not new, Lund argues that concept was first used in the in 1960 by Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. For a discussion on the origins and evolution of the concept, see Michael Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, Washington, DC: USIP Press, 1996, pp. 32-34

⁵⁵ Janie Leatherman et. al, *Breaking Cycles of Violence*, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁶ Michael Barnett, "Partners In peace? The UN, regional organizations, and peace-keeping", *Review of International Studies* (1995), 21, 411-433. For a similar discussion, see I. William Zartman and Saadia Touval, "Mediation: The Role of Third Party Diplomacy and Informal Peacemaking," in Sheryl J. Brown and Kimber M. Schraub, eds., *Resolving Third World Conflict: Challenges for a New Era*, Washington, DC: USIP Press, 1992, pp. 246-7

- the UN and regional security organizations - and these organizations normally intervene not for narrow state interests, but for humanitarian reasons.

Some analysts are of the view that, in the post-Cold War world, the task of intervening in conflicts, particularly in Africa, is entrusted to international actors without much rational consideration as to their capabilities and the requirements posed by crisis situations.⁵⁷ Consequently, the limitations of these organizations became clear rather quickly, since their interventions were often tardy and based on belated decision-making.⁵⁸ Notwithstanding this observation, the reality of the post-Cold War world is that there will be more reliance on international and regional organizations during conflict situations in Africa. If these organizations, for whatever reasons, always act too little and too late, the wisest choice politically and economically, is to redirect their attention, efforts and resources to preventive action so that they can intervene in conflicts before they escalate to higher levels of intensity. When there is timely action before violence erupts, it is easy to influence standpoints of parties, since, as Zartman argues, entrapment or over-commitment of their resources to the cause of conflict makes them less amenable to seeking a peaceful solution.⁵⁹

Indeed, it will be wise if the eruption of conflict is prevented in the first place. One does not need to dig too far to make the argument that in most conflict situations in Africa, if there had been an investment in preventive efforts, not only would many lives have been saved, it would have also made a lot of economic sense rather than trying to fix

⁵⁷ See for example, Klaas van Walraven, "Introduction," in Klaas van Walraven, ed., *Early Warning and Conflict Prevention: Limitations and Possibilities*, The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1998, p. 2

⁵⁸ The failure of the UN to protect the people of Rwanda and to prevent the 1994 genocide is a case in point.

⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion on this, see I. W. Zartman, "Conflict Reduction: Prevention, Management, and Resolution," in F. M. Deng and I. W. Zartman, eds., *Conflict Resolution in Africa*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institutions, 1991, pp. 299-319

the problem once ‘the genie was out of the bottle.’⁶⁰ We are very much aware that conflicts do not occur overnight. In most situations, it takes months, and in some cases years, for situations to degenerate into violence. In Somalia and Rwanda, for instance, it has been documented that opportunities existed for the international community to limit, and in fact prevent, conflict.⁶¹ In the case of Rwanda, Michael Brown and Richard Rosecrance have noted that “it was well understood in late March and early April 1994 that the situation in Rwanda was moving toward violence.”⁶² Unfortunately however, the international community ‘missed’ the opportunities for preventive action and watched Rwanda plunge into genocide.

The United Nations, whose principal purpose as defined in its Charter is the maintenance of peace and security, and which is *mandated to prevent conflicts*, whether inter- or intra-state, is yet to realize the dream of a stable world and justify its *raison d’être*.⁶³ For one thing, the United Nations is facing a crisis of expectations in which the demands for its services far exceed its capabilities and the general desire within the organization to prevent conflict. Coming after the United Nations are African regional and sub-regional organizations – the OAU, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC. At the lower level are NGOs operating in Africa as well as local civil society groups. Even though these organizations are weak resource wise, it is evident that they have a lot to offer.⁶⁴ In the

⁶⁰ For an analysis of the cost-benefit calculus in conflict prevention see, Michael E. Brown and Richard N. Rosecrance, “Comparing Costs of Prevention and Costs of Conflict: Toward a New Methodology,” and “The Case for Conflict Prevention” in Michael E. Brown and Richard N. Rosecrance, eds., *The Costs of Conflict: Prevention and Cure in the Global Arena*, Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, pp. 1-22 & 221-232

⁶¹ See for example Bruce W. Jentleson, “Preventive Diplomacy: Analytical Conclusions and Policy Lessons,” in Bruce W. Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized*, p. 320

⁶² Michael E. Brown and Richard N. Rosecrance, “Comparing Costs of Prevention and Costs of Conflict: Toward a New Methodology,” in Brown and Rosecrance, eds., *The Costs of Conflict*, p. 1

⁶³ Both Articles 34 and 99 of the UN Charter empower the Security Council and the Secretary-General respectively to take action to prevent conflicts.

⁶⁴ ECOWAS member states demonstrated this in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau

past, however, discourse about conflict prevention in Africa has ignored the active roles that such organizations can play. Some analysts have suggested that the 'agency' of African organizations needs to be appreciated and then nurtured, if conflicts are to be dealt with properly on the continent. This calls for a very close collaboration between the UN and these organizations in an effort to stem the tide of violence in Africa. Not only that, there is also the need for a concerted effort among other international actors as well as various local governments within Africa.

This approach thus leaves us with two levels of analysis - 'the international' and 'regional.' In order to simplify our analysis, regional organizations/states, will be included in our 'local' level of analysis. The contribution that this thesis makes to the discourse on conflict prevention is focusing on the important role that regional organizations can play with the help and support of the international community to prevent conflicts in Africa. In all the cases examined in this thesis, regional organizations have played a very important role, sometimes with support from the international community, and at other times without such support. The results are mixed as indicated in the case studies. What is clear is that there is the urgent need to find ways to improve the methods of collaboration between these two levels for effective prevention of conflicts.

Our dependent variable - prevention - is produced by three independent variables - early warning; timing; and tools and strategies. To achieve the objective of the thesis, using our case studies, we will examine the effect(s) of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

(b) Independent Variable 1: Early Warning

An important component of prevention is early warning and the timing of the response that follows the warning signals. Alexander George and Jane Holl have argued that, while there might be disagreement on the scope of preventive diplomacy and the strategies to be employed, there is no disagreement on the importance of obtaining early warning information.⁶⁵ Early warning simply means sending signals, credible or otherwise perceived, in advance of an impending crisis. It is, as one analyst put it, “sounding alarm bells at the right time and in a salutary and appropriate manner.”⁶⁶

From the substantial body of literature that aims at developing an early warning system, the crucial task that remains to be overcome is knowing exactly what types of events/activities provoke the intensification of conflict, how these events/activities can be well understood by the policymakers, and how the latter can develop carefully targeted policy responses to these events. According to John Cockell, the content and practice of early warning tend to be shaped by at least six factors: subject, operational purpose, method, user, target recipient and format.⁶⁷ Reflecting these needs, Kumar Rupesinghe, for instance, has nicely packaged the task of early warning into three key areas: 1) information gathering; 2) the analysis and understanding of that information; and 3) appropriate response.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Alexander L. George and Jane E. Holl, “The Warning-Response Problem and Missed Opportunities in Preventive Diplomacy,” in Bruce Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed*, p. 21.

⁶⁶ Rotberg I. Rotberg, ed., *Vigilance and Vengeance: NGOs Preventing Ethnic Conflict in Divided Societies*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1996, p. 4, cited in Bruce Jentleson, “Preventive Diplomacy: Conceptual and Analytic Framework,” in Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed*, p. 20.

⁶⁷ John Cockell, “Early warning analysis and policy planning in UN preventive action”, in David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel, eds., *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion*, pp. 184-185.

⁶⁸ Kumar Rupesinghe, *Civil Wars, Civil Peace: An Introduction to Conflict Resolution*, London and Sterling, VA.: Pluto Press, 1998, p. 66.

For the purpose of this thesis, it might be more accurate to amend Rupesinghe's third task to 'dissemination' instead of 'appropriate response.' This is necessary for two reasons. First, I believe that once early warning information is gathered and analyzed, what has usually been lacking is how to appropriately sell this information to policymakers – the people who make the decision about intervening to prevent conflict. Second, Rupesinghe's third classification will fall under one of our other independent variables - strategy - which only comes after all issues relating to early warning are resolved.

(i) Information Gathering

The first and most important prerequisite of any early warning system is the ability to forecast correctly what type (s) of activities are likely to lead to the escalation of crisis and thus warrant attention if conflict is to be prevented. Thus, in the last couple of years, efforts have been devoted to finding the most effective indicators, methods, and information systems by which conflict situations can be identified at an early stage.⁶⁹

In general, three broad issues are the subject of early warning information gathering. These include *structural factors, dynamic factors or accelerators, and trigger incidents.*⁷⁰

⁶⁹ See for example, Janie Leatherman et. al, *Breaking Cycles of Violence: Conflict Prevention in Intrastate Crises*, West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1999, p. 28.

⁷⁰ John L. Davies and Ted Robert Gurr, "Preventive Measures: An Overview," in John L. Davies and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *Preventive Measures: Building Risk Assessment and Crisis Early Warning Systems*, Lanham, Maryland and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, pp. 4-5

Table 1.2: Early Warning Information

Structural Factors	Dynamic Factors	Trigger Incidents
History of State repression; Exclusionary ideologies; Lack of democracy; High social cohesion; External support for aggrieved groups; Environmental degradation; Increasing population pressures.	Arms acquisitions; Incidents of aggressive posturing or low-intensity violence; New discriminatory and repressive policies; Crop failures and major currency devaluations.	Coup attempt; Assassination; External intervention or declared state of emergency.

(Source: Davis and Gurr, 1998)

As the table indicates, *structural factors* relate to the underlying causes of conflict. These are long-term factors that have probably been simmering for many years. The *dynamic factors* represent medium-term causes of conflict. What these factors do is to reinforce the structural factors but they do not initiate conflict in and of themselves. Conflict arises in most cases when there is a trigger. This is where *trigger incidents* become important. These incidents are generally “excuses” for initiating conflict because by the time they happen, the stage is already set given the presence of both *structural* and *dynamic* factors.

In general, efforts at information gathering are hampered not by the lack of information (especially in today’s internet age) but by a lack of agreement on what type of information is needed and relevant and what is the best method of packaging this information so that it can be user-friendly.

Davies and Gurr identify four approaches that address the above problem and that aim at gathering time-sensitive information. These include: 1) in-country situation studies by specialized observers such as Rights and Watch organizations, NGOs and state

intelligence agencies; 2) screening and analytical coding of public news sources either by human coders or through automated event-data analysis; 3) systematized sharing of field reports and analyses from existing governmental or inter-governmental agencies and NGOs; and 4) coded assessments by country experts of developing situations and trends.⁷¹ In addition to these approaches, two other very relevant approaches, which are structural in nature and aimed at long-term forecasts of deteriorating situations, include: (1) country or group profiles, or databases of structural indicators; (2) episodic databases that profile past crises, e.g. the International Crisis Behavior dataset.⁷² The former set of indicators provide long-term risk assessments, which are useful for projecting future trends. Examples include Gurr's Minorities at Risk project and Carment's Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) at Carleton University.

Leatherman et al. have noted a key problem with such datasets for predicting conflict. They argue that there is a mechanical bias in much of the early warning literature to the extent that there is an assumption "given the appropriate methods and a reliable data base, violent conflicts can be detected and their escalation prevented."⁷³ Following from Janis (1990), Leatherman et al. argue that experts not only need to develop sources of gathering information, they also need to "sell" them to decision makers.⁷⁴ This calls for a proper analysis and 'packaging' of whatever information that is available.

From the above-mentioned approaches, it is clear that the gatherers of early warning information are many and varied. A number of these gatherers are identified in the literature. These include, Rights and Watch organizations, humanitarian NGOs,

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁷² Ibid., p. 7.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 28.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

international NGOs, the UN, international economic organizations, the media, states, intelligence agencies, civic groups, religious communities, and academics.⁷⁵ These actors have varying degrees of strengths and weaknesses with regards to access to, reliability of, and openness in the utilization of information.⁷⁶ Their strengths and weaknesses is summarized in Table 3.

Table 1.3: Actors in the Collection of Early Warning Information⁷⁷

	Access	Reliability	Openness
Scholars	Low	High	High
NGOs	Medium	Medium	Medium
Media	High	Medium	High
Intelligence	High	Medium	Low
Governments	Medium	Medium	Low
United Nations	High	Medium	Medium
Civic groups	Medium	Medium	High
Religious communities	Medium	Medium	High

Given the varying advantages of the various actors, the key task is to harness these various advantages such that information can be gathered in the quickest and most effective way possible. In addition, there is also the need to issue the warning notification in a subtle manner so as to avoid a situation where the warning signals become ‘self-fulfilling prophecies’ for the actors, thereby defeating the purpose of prevention.

⁷⁵ See for instance Leatherman et al., *Breaking Cycles of Violence*, p. 39; Howard Adelman, “Difficulties in Early Warning: Networking and Conflict Management, in Klaas van Walraven, ed., *Early Warning and Conflict Prevention: Limitations and Possibilities*, p. 68; and Kumar Rupesinghe, *Civil Wars, Civil Peace*, pp. 66-75.

⁷⁶ Leatherman et al., *Breaking Cycles of Violence*, p. 39.

⁷⁷ This table was adapted from Leatherman et al. The table was modified to include the UN, through its agencies, among the actors involved in the collection of early warning information.

(ii) Analyzing Warning Signals

Clearly, the reliability of whatever information is gathered depends to a large extent on the proper analysis of information, the aim of which, as Kumar Rupesinghe has appropriately noted, “is to clarify how the information available can be used as an indicator of conflict escalation.”⁷⁸ In the last couple of years, a great deal of research has been undertaken with the aim of developing a common set of conflict indicators that could be used over time and space to predict a country’s vulnerability to conflict. Prominent among these are: the Minorities at Risk Project, the State Failures Project, UNHEWS, UNHCR, the Forum for Early Warning and Response (FEWER), Carleton University’s Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP), the Global Event Data System (GEDS), the Protocol for the Assessment of Nonviolent Direct Action (PANDA), and the Interdisciplinary Research Program on Root Causes of Human Rights Violations (PIOOM), to mention just a few.

For instance, in their recent “Peace and Conflict Ledger, 2001,” Gurr et al. ranked 160 countries worldwide with populations greater 500,000 on six indicators of capacity building for peace and avoiding destabilizing political crises. These indicators include armed conflict; self-determination; regime type; regime durability; societal capacity and neighborhood. A country’s peace-building capacity is high if it has avoided recent armed conflicts, has stable democratic institutions and is free of serious threats from its external environment, among other factors. Gurr et al. weighted the six indicators – 2 for red, 1 for yellow and –1.5 for green. These weights were averaged and countries with an average greater than 1 were ‘red flagged’ and countries with a less than 0 average were

considered to have the highest capacity. Of the 45 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, only 6 have a capacity for managing conflict, the rest were 'red flagged.'⁷⁹ The implication of this is simple: it makes the case for conflict prevention in Africa even more compelling because if the majority of the states in Africa do not have the capacity to manage conflicts, allowing conflicts to fester and blow up only further weakens state capacity.

Information gathered from early warning surveys has to be analyzed to provide a risk assessment of a situation. According to Davies and Gurr, there are two broad approaches to analyzing early warning information. First is the *conventional approach*. This approach aims at using information, irrespective of the source, and preparing interpretive reports for policymakers. Under this approach, the use of explicit analytic methods is minimized and emphasis is rather placed on the substance of the assessment and warning.⁸⁰ Different from, and complementary to the conventional approach is, the second set of approaches – *analytic*. These approaches are primarily used by academics and tend to employ explicit causal models of crisis phenomena. These approaches tend to be accessible for testing, retrospectively and in real time and over time; their cumulative results provide a basis for progressive refinement and adaptation.⁸¹

Under the rubric of these two general approaches, there are currently three types of analysis in use. The first is the use of *structural indicator or causal models*. Analytic in nature, these models identify the relative weight that should be placed on indicators, the extent of the relationship of the indicators to a particular crisis, and the probable time lag between the emergence of new causal factors and the onset of crisis. Since patterns of

⁷⁸ Kumar Rupesinghe, *Civil Wars, Civil Peace*, p. 76.

⁷⁹ Ted Robert Gurr, Monty G. Marshall and Deepa Khosla, *Peace and Conflict Ledger 2001*, pp. 2-6.

⁸⁰ Davies and Gurr, "Preventive Measures: An Overview," p. 8.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

causal relations are likely to change over time, these models require periodic updates. Second is the use of *sequential models*, which track more precisely when high-risk situations are likely to erupt into crisis. These models require testing with a large case set, adaptation across differing contexts, and the re-assessments of the models over time as contexts change. The third is *inductive models*. Unlike the two other models, these tend to look for more complex patterns in the analysis of dynamic data thus bringing added complexity and power to the analysis of data. Like the other models, however, they also require extensive testing and adaptation over space and time.⁸²

In addition, Rupesinghe has also noted that, at a conceptual level, there is a gap between quantitative analysis and qualitative reports. Whilst the former can be useful in monitoring and recognizing trends, they have limited impact when political decisions have to be made. Qualitative reports, on the other hand, provide descriptive accounts but have the tendency to be considered subjective. The key to overcoming such a problem is the development of trigger identification mechanisms.⁸³ This is similar to the *sequential model* discussed earlier.

Barbara Haff's work focuses on *sequential models* and the role of accelerators and triggers.⁸⁴ Her *sequential model* is a modification of the *processual models* developed by Bloomfield and Leiss (1967) and identifies accelerators to include: "new discriminatory policies by a regime; clashes between regime supporters and target groups; increased external support for politically active groups; threats of external involvement not backed by action; increase in size and cohesion of opposition group;

⁸² See Ibid. for details on these various analyses.

⁸³ Rupesinghe, *Civil Wars, Civil Peace*, pp. 76-78.

⁸⁴ According to Harff, accelerator events are those that are linked to larger interests or issues in conflict situations and are reminders of the issues at stake. Triggers are the events that escalate existing issues.

aggressive posturing by opposition groups; increase in life integrity violations.”⁸⁵ She argues that *processual models*, like most models, are only good for giving a rough risk assessment of impending disasters. What they cannot do is predict with some degree of certainty which events will lead to crises. Prediction with some degree of certainty is important so as to give policy makers time to prepare adequate and appropriate responses. Thus, Harff argues that:

What is missing are models that postulate which specific pattern of events will advance an evolving crisis to which specific type of open conflict. The most critical factors, commonly known as triggers, are typically not known or specified.⁸⁶

In this thesis, I adopt Harff’s *sequential model* for the analysis of early warning information. As indicated in table 1 on page 33 on early warning information gathering, there are generally three broad issues of concern - *structural factors, dynamic factors or accelerators, and trigger incidents*. Since the primary concern of this work is acting to prevent the escalation of violence at the *pre-violence* stage of the conflict cycle, the immediate short-term emphasis is on accelerators and triggers. This is not to say that structural factors are not important, they come only once accelerators and triggers are dealt with. Against this background, the *sequential model*, which places emphasis on accelerators and triggers and predicts events that have the tendency to advance evolving crises, becomes appropriate for helping policy makers decide where and at what moment to intervene to close the *warning-response* gap and prevent a conflict from moving beyond the *pre-violence* stage.

Using an everyday analogy, triggers were identified as the equivalent of a match thrown onto a combustible pile and accelerators, the gasoline poured on the pile making it combustible.

⁸⁵ See Barbara Harff, “Early Warning of Humanitarian Crises: Sequential Models and the Role of Accelerators,” in Gurr and Davies, eds., *Preventive Measures*, p. 74.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Critics will argue that placing emphasis on accelerators and triggers is a ‘band-aid’ approach to conflict prevention, since it pays attention immediate factors only leaving background, long-term, factors unattended. Such a view is mistaken since accelerators and triggers are linked to structural conditions and identifying them will help address underlying causes of conflict. Harff forcefully argues that:

Accelerator events typically are reflective of, and are linked to, larger interests or issues. They are reminders of the larger issues at stake, those that have been identified in our specification of background or intervening conditions for particular kinds of conflict or crises. In the absence of these preconditions, accelerators are not accelerators, they are simply events.⁸⁷

Leatherman et al. argue that experts not only need to develop sources of gathering information, they also need to “sell” them to decision makers.⁸⁸ This calls for a proper analysis and packaging of whatever information that is available. Packaging in this case means not only analysing the information in a way that easily conveys meaning to policymakers, but also recognizing the fact that various models have their limitations, thereby appropriately combining multiple approaches to the collection and analysis of information. Thus, for early warning to be meaningful, it has to be properly formatted and appropriately targeted at those who need the information. Such an approach will no doubt help policymakers design meaningful targeted policy responses to developing crises.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 73.

⁸⁸ Leatherman et al., *Breaking Cycles of Violence*, p. 39.

(iii) Responding Appropriately

Early warning is of little or no value if it is not matched with an appropriate response.

Policymakers, whether local or international, need to move fast enough with the appropriate response before a situation deteriorates. As Gurr and Davies aptly note:

The greater task, toward which all early warning work is directed, is how to create the conditions under which it is possible for governmental and IO agencies and NGOs to launch well-planned, proactive initiatives that are adapted to local cultural and political contexts and likely to be effective in preventing or alleviating potential humanitarian crises.⁸⁹

Over the years, Gurr and Davies' "greater task" has eluded policymakers the world over. It is true, as some analysts have noted, that most troubled regions - the Caucasus, the Balkans, Africa, etc. - have been the focus of close international scrutiny and preventive efforts. But it also true, as Harff has noted, that the current haphazard way of warning about impending doom has not only impeded efforts to build more reliable forecasting systems; the lack of accuracy resulting from it has also led policymakers to hasty decisions with no clear direction and exit option.⁹⁰

One serious effect of doing early warning in a haphazard manner is that in most cases 'the alarm bells' are sounded when a situation has already deteriorated, in which case, prevention is not pre-emptive enough. Thus, the challenge for early warning, as Gurr has noted, "is to search beyond the horizon to identify latent and low-level conflicts that have not yet attracted CNN crews or fact-finding missions."⁹¹

⁸⁹ Gurr and Davies "An Overview," in Gurr and Davies, eds., *Preventive Measures*, p. 9.

⁹⁰ Barbara Harff, "Early Warning of Humanitarian Crises," p. 71.

⁹¹ Ted Robert Gurr, "Early-Warning Systems: From Surveillance to Assessment to Action," in Kevin M. Cahill, ed., *Preventive Diplomacy: Stopping Wars Before They Start*, New York: Basic Books, 1996, pp. 123-124.

In fact, one of the most important and difficult puzzles with regards to early warning identified in the literature is how to bridge the *warning-response gap*. George and Holl have noted that in many conflicts timely or accurate warning may not be the problem at all. Rather, the question of inaction is the problem – explicit decisions are sometimes made not to act or inaction results from decisions bogging down.⁹² They identify six factors for passivity.

The first is the generally perceived low stakes at risk in most internal conflicts - they are seen not to pose any immediate threat to the national interest of the states capable of acting to stem the tide of violence. Second, despite the efforts to streamline early warning indicators, Jane and Holl argue that warning signals are open to varied interpretations, leading to experts and policymakers to differ in their estimates of the seriousness of the situation. Third, and following from the second point, specialists have still not developed better theories and models to assess and predict the importance of warning indicators. Indeed, as we noted earlier, early warning information is not properly “packaged” for the consumption of policymakers. Fourth, because policymakers are too often subjected to the “cry wolf” phenomenon, and because they are usually preoccupied with other “pressing” issues, they tend to pay less attention to low-level crises that are the outcome of early warning. Fifth, there is the question of demand and supply. Policymakers cannot respond to the list of ever-growing simmering crises. Finally, there is the question of political will – policymakers simply fail to act because of domestic and other constraints.⁹³ This is consistent with Carment and Harvey’s

⁹² George and Holl, in Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed*, p. 29.

⁹³ Ibid.

contention that, even though prevention is crucial in the management of conflicts today, “there is rarely a collective political will to act prior to the outbreak of violence.”⁹⁴

In the face of this discovery, what then can be done to close the gap between warning and response? The last two factors in the Jane and Holl’s list – demand and supply and political will – bring to the fore a very important point with regards to intervention in African conflicts; there is too much over-reliance on external actors and the international community to come to the aid of Africa each time a crisis is developing. If there is to be early response, there has to be improved co-operation and co-ordination between African actors (regional and sub-regional organizations) and the international actors (states, IOs, NGOs, IFIs, etc.) such that the burden does not solely rest on the latter. It is true that intervention, at whatever level of conflict, requires resources; but it is also true that the kind of resources needed in simmering and low-level conflicts are not beyond the reach of African organizations, especially if priorities are put where they belong.

If there is proper co-ordination between local and international actors, there could be some form of division of labor in terms of information gathering and analysis as well in the design of appropriate responses. There is little doubt that, because of their proximity, local actors are well placed to assume a good part of the responsibility for conflict prevention in their backyards. One should, however, not be blind to the fact that this same proximity is a source of problems, especially between regional powers. Gilbert Khadiagala, in examining the prospects for division of labor between African regional organizations and international actors based on what he calls “an inevitable trend in the post-Cold War global division of labor,” noted that any such role for African actors

⁹⁴ David B. Carment, and Frank Harvey, *Using Force to Prevent Ethnic Violence: An Evaluation of Theory and Evidence*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000, p. 84.

hinges on transparency and leadership. This is rightly so, especially if one examines the recent history of interventions mounted by African actors. For instance, the noble ideals that brought the ECOMOG into being were immediately shattered when regional rivalries and in-fighting emerged.

It should also be noted that division of labor does not imply the United Nations will cease to assume the basic responsibility for the maintenance of global peace and security since article 34 of the Charter specifically mandates the Security Council to perform this role.⁹⁵

(c) Independent Variable 2: Timing

The issue of timing is very crucial in conflict prevention. If conflict prevention is to be successful, there is the need to mount an intervention before violence erupts. According to the structuralist paradigm of mediation,⁹⁶ timing is based on the twin concepts of “ripeness” and “hurting stalemate” developed by Zartman, Kriesberg, Hass and Stedman, among others. Zartman, for instance, argues that the “ripe” moment arrives when both sides to a conflict perceive the conflict as “unwinnable” in which case the cost of continued fighting is higher than the cost of seeking a settlement.⁹⁷ For Kriesberg,

⁹⁵ Article 34 of the Charter states that “the Security Council may investigate any dispute, or any situation ... to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.”

⁹⁶ Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, following from Hopmann (1995), classified the debate over the issues of mediation into two paradigms: the structuralist and the social-psychological. Of concern to us in this work is the structuralist paradigm which is premised on the issue of timing and bases on the twin concepts of ‘ripeness’ and ‘hurting stalemate’. For a discussion on these paradigms, see Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, “Multiparty Mediation and the Conflict Cycle,” in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, Washington, D. C.: USIP, 1999, pp. 20-29.

⁹⁷ I. William Zartman and Saadia Touval, “International Mediation: Conflict Resolution and Power Politics,” *Journal of Social Issues*, 41, 2, 1985: 27-45; and I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

“ripeness” is a metaphor, which refers to the appropriated time to undertake an effort to achieve desired results.⁹⁸

There are two main problems with the theory of “ripeness.” First, it is difficult to determine the appropriate moment for mediators to make a move. It is easier in theory than in actual practice. Second, the theory suggests “inaction” once a conflict begins until war weariness sets in. It is important to note that Zartman, Kriesberg and other negotiation analysts developed these theories with conflict management and not conflict prevention in mind; nonetheless, the theory of timing is even more relevant in conflict prevention than conflict management for two reasons. First, in conflict management, timing is aimed at de-escalating conflict, at which level it is difficult to alter the perceptions of the various parties to the conflict – they have already developed very hard-line positions. Second, and following from the previous point, once timing is aimed at the pre-violence stage of conflict, all things being equal, it is easier to affect the political and personal positions of the actors since they are more malleable at this point than at the point where conflict has already escalated.

Thus, since, for the purpose of this thesis, the focus is on the timing of the response that follows warning signals, and because of our definition of conflict prevention, timing in this case will not be premised on when war weariness sets in, but when the parties to the conflict are mobilizing to start conflict and when it is easier to make a desired change in their attitudes.

According to Kriesberg, “One meaning of timing is that events and changes occur in sequence and, therefore, a particular de-escalation effort must be made at the appropriate

⁹⁸ Louis Kriesberg, “Introduction: Timing Conditions, Strategies, and Errors,” in Louis Kriesberg and Stuart J. Thorson, eds., *Timing The De-Escalation of International Conflicts*, Syracuse: Syracuse University

time in the sequence of developments.”⁹⁹ This definition of timing is relevant to the discussion in this thesis. “Good timing” will refer to a situation where interveners will take action at an opportune time vis-à-vis the prevailing conditions. I have already argued that this thesis adopts the *sequential model* of analyzing early warning information because it places emphasis on accelerators and triggers and predicts events that have the tendency to advance evolving crises. Such a model can help interveners determine the best moment to get involved in a conflict situation. “Good timing” here will be intervention at a time when accelerators and triggers begin to emerge. In this case, timing is more about best moments to act than simply about chronological development of events, since when and how soon accelerators and triggers emerge might differ from one conflict situation to another. In one instance, there might be very fast developments, whilst events might unfold more slowly in others.

“Bad timing” might be considered to be a situation where interveners fail to take advantage of crucial moments when they need to act to prevent the escalation of a conflict situation. Intervenors in this case would have missed opportunities to forestall accelerators and triggers of a conflict situation, leading the conflict to move beyond the *pre-violence* stage.

Press, 1991, p. 4.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

(d) Independent Variable 3: Tools and Strategies

When the issue of early warning is settled, the problem of what strategy for what kind of warning emerges. The literature generally points towards the use of ‘mixed strategies’ since, as Jentleson notes, ‘there cannot be a standard preventive diplomacy strategy, one size fits all...’¹⁰⁰ This is true, especially given the fact that conflict is dynamic and generally evolves in several different stages. There is therefore the need for an understanding of what effort at what stage of a conflict constitutes prevention. Ryan’s five stages and their corresponding strategies (referred to earlier) is illustrative.

It is clear from Ryan’s classification that the strategy to be adopted depends on the intensity of the conflict in question. For instance, if based on early warning information it is evident that tension exists between various contending groups, conflict could be said to be at a *pre-violence* stage. According to Lund, at this stage of a conflict cycle, prevention can assume different forms: “crisis prevention” – efforts to bloc violent acts; “pre-emptive engagement” – getting parties to cooperate; and “pre-conflict peace building” – promoting dispute resolution.¹⁰¹ These are all efforts geared towards preventing escalation.

This thesis is concerned with preventing escalation and ensuring that conflict does not move beyond its initial pre-violence stage. In fact, the focus is on ‘early’ as opposed to ‘late’ prevention. Leatherman et al. define escalation in terms of two dimensions: vertical and horizontal. *Vertical escalation* refers to the increase in the magnitude of a dispute in terms of casualties and the level of their suffering. Therefore, controlling vertical escalation aims at reducing casualties and physical destruction through the use of

¹⁰⁰ Jentleson, p. 13.

force. *Horizontal escalation* on the other refers to the expansion of the conflict in terms of geographical scope, issues, actors and actor's goals. Thus, containing horizontal escalation means limiting the scope, issues and number of actors involved in a conflict.¹⁰² But what kind of tools and strategies are likely to be effective in preventing conflict from moving from the pre-violence stage to escalation? Two sets of strategies of preventing conflict are generally isolated – military and non-military strategies (economic and political).¹⁰³

(i) Military Coercion

Over the years, military instruments have been applied in conflict situations to try to prevent escalation. The problem however has been that, in most instances, these strategies are employed at a time when the situation is hitting the crisis point and at which time it too late for prevention. If military instruments are properly employed, they can be very effective preventive tools. In fact, preventive military actions range from preventive war through limited operations to the establishment of deterrence and the balance of power.¹⁰⁴ The establishment of deterrence is of interest in the context of this discussion. This is informed by the conviction that sometimes non-military strategies have to be

¹⁰¹ Michael S. Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflict: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, Washington, D. C.: USIP, 1996, pp. 46-48.

¹⁰² Leatherman et al., *Breaking Cycles of Violence*, p. 102.

¹⁰³ See for example, Michael S. Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflict: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, Washington, D. C.: USIP, 1996; Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Final Report*, Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997; Leatherman et al., *Breaking Cycles of Violence*; David Cortright, ed., *The Price of Peace: Incentives and International Conflict Prevention*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997; Lori Fisler Damrosch, ed., *Enforcing Restraint: Collective Intervention in Internal Conflicts*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993; Bruce Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized*, etc.

¹⁰⁴ Leatherman et al., *Breaking Cycles of Violence*, p. 105.

backed by a credible threat to use force against aggressive actors if escalation is to be prevented.

The use of force is very delicate and sometimes needs to be governed by certain principles so that it is not perceived as an invasion of a weak state by a strong one. Accordingly, the Final Report of the Carnegie Commission proposes three broad guidelines that should govern any decision on the use of force.¹⁰⁵ First, the provisions of the UN Charter must govern any such decision. Chapter VI of the Charter empowers the Security Council to use diplomatic and peaceful means in the resolution of disputes. Over the years, the UN has performed this task under the banner of peacekeeping.¹⁰⁶ It has become clear in recent years, because of the changing nature of conflicts (from inter- to intra-state), that peacekeeping in the traditional sense is not up to the task of preventing escalation.

Chapter VII of the Charter mandates the Security Council to authorize a state or a coalition of states to use force for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security. This is peace enforcement and a classic instance of its use was in the 1990 Gulf War. Peace enforcement, because of the risks it carries, has become a very delicate issue in the post-Cold War international environment. Since Somalia, there has been a growing unwillingness on the part of the 'big powers' to sanction any peace enforcement action because of its implications for them. Where they do sanction peace enforcement, it mainly involves the use of peacekeepers from the Third World. Those who view

¹⁰⁵ Carnegie Commission, *Final Report*, pp. 59-63.

¹⁰⁶ Alan James provides one of the most widely used definitions of peacekeeping - "a peacekeeping body is a traditional-looking military force, composed of a number of battalions and the authority of a commander. The battalions will have been detached from or supplied by various national armies, and the commander is appointed by, and be responsible to, the international authority which has arranged the operation." The concept of peacekeeping is derived from certain principles: the consent of the parties to the conflict; the use

security not in classic realist terms make the *human security* argument – the UN and, by extension, the international community has an obligation to protect human life when it is threatened on a large scale.

The second provision, according to the Commission, is that the use of force should not be regarded as a last resort in desperate circumstances. This is where deterrence plays a very important role. Actors can take advantage of a deteriorating situation and deploy preventively, sending a signal to potential detractors that their actions will be met with force. One of the few preventive deployments in the history of the UN was UNPREDEP in Macedonia in 1992. Kofi Annan, who was under-Secretary for Peacekeeping at the time, was very optimistic about this deployment:

By applying the right elements in the right strength over the right period, the international community has created what might well be a paradigm for future preventive deployment missions and what has certainly been the most successful element of its treatment in the Balkans.¹⁰⁷

True, this deployment helped prevent conflict in Macedonia in the 1990s, but the March/April 2003 uprising there has undone the effects of this deployment. Whilst, in this case, the deterioration of the situation has little or no link with the deployment, in general, any such deployment should be done with care since it has the potential of doing the direct opposite of its intended effect – preventing escalation. In fact, many observers are skeptical about the use of force in this way since it “comes dangerously close to starting down the slippery slope of entanglement.”¹⁰⁸ The Commission thus concludes that any preventive deployment “must be carefully integrated with other policy

of force only in self-defense and more importantly, claims to impartiality to be upheld. See Alan James, *Peace Keeping in International Politics*, London: Macmillan, 1990, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Kofi A. Annan, “The Peace-keeping Prescription,” in Kevin M. Cahill, ed., *Preventive Diplomacy*, pp. 180-1.

instruments, calibrated to the interests engaged, and supported by consistent political and diplomatic signals to underscore the seriousness of purpose.”¹⁰⁹

The third provision, according to the Commission is that states, especially the major powers, must accept that if the threat of use of force becomes necessary, it must be part of a multilateral strategy and used alongside political and economic instruments.

The intended effect of threat to use force is deterrence. Some analysts have reservations about the deterrent effect of multilateral use of force. They argue that multilateral arrangements have little deterrent value unless they are institutionalized into a collective security system.¹¹⁰ At the international level, such an institution is yet to come into existence, if it ever will. There have been unsuccessful attempts at the level of the UN to establish a standing army which can perform such a role.¹¹¹ To date the only such organization is NATO, which has played and continues to play a very important role in European stability, especially in the Balkans. In Africa, ECOMOG can be said to be the only security organization that is being nurtured and developed by ECOWAS and donors like Canada so it can eventually be institutionalized to be able to play a more proactive role in addressing crises in the West African sub-region.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Leatherman et al., p. 107. Also, Charles Kupchan, “The Case for Collective Security,” in George W. Downs, ed., *Collective Security Beyond the Cold War*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994, pp. 41-67.

¹¹¹ See Jocelyn Coulon, *Soldiers of Diplomacy: The United Nations, Peacekeeping, and the New World Order*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998, pp. 145-152. Coulon documents how the ‘big powers’ at the UN, especially the United States, obstructed former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali’s attempt to create a UN Standing Army.

(ii) *Economic Diplomacy*

Economic tools of diplomacy in foreign policy can be either positive (incentives) or negative (sanctions) – “carrots or sticks.” Positive economic tools of diplomacy can be very effective in preventing conflict in a world in which violence is often fueled by deep-seated economic and social inequalities, yet the literature devotes little attention to positive incentives. Instead, a lot of attention is devoted to the use of sanctions in shaping political relations among nations.¹¹² It should be noted, however, that sanctions, or negative incentives, necessarily have to be employed under certain circumstances. Cortright rightly points out that “the use of incentives is simply not appropriate, either morally or as an instrument of effective policy. Incentives may be counterproductive if employed in the face of armed conflict and overt military aggression.”¹¹³ Assuming that it is “business as usual” in the face of aggression encourages and cultivates tyranny.

What constitutes incentives is subject to debate. One school of thought defines incentives as “the offer of a reward by a sender in exchange for a particular action or response by a recipient” or more specifically as “the granting of a political or economic benefit in exchange for a specified policy adjustment by the recipient nation.”¹¹⁴ These types of incentives sometimes put a lot of pressure on the recipient to show results, because of the conditions attached, thereby leading to policy failures and tensions in

¹¹² See for example, David Cortright and George Lopez, eds., *Economic Sanctions: Panacea or Peacebuilding in a Post-Cold War World?*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995; Gary C. Hufbauer, Jeffrey J. Schott, and Kimberly Ann Elliott, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered: History and Current Policy*, 2^d ed., Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 1990; Margaret Doxey, *Economic Sanctions in Contemporary Perspective*, 2d ed., New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996; and Richard N. Haass, ed., *Economic Sanctions and American Diplomacy*, Washington: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998. In a recent study, David Cortright attempted to address this neglect and show the benefits of incentive in international diplomacy. For this, see David Cortright, ed., *The Price of Peace: Incentives and International Conflict Prevention*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997.

¹¹³ Cortright, *The Price of Peace*, p. 278-9.

¹¹⁴ This is how the authors in Cortright’s edited volume define incentives. See David Cortright, ed., *The Price of Peace*, p. 6.

recipient countries. Recent IMF and World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) fall under this category. Many analysts argue that most of these programs are responsible for the rising tensions in many Third World countries, especially those of sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹⁵

If incentives are to have a preventive effect, they have to be carefully applied with little or no conditionalities at all. Thus this study builds on Alexander George's "pure" incentive – an incentive that carries little or no explicit conditions.¹¹⁶

According to the UN Human Development Report 1999, recent research on complex humanitarian emergencies has found a correlation between "horizontal inequalities" between groups - ethnic, social or religious - and the current wave of conflicts.¹¹⁷ It therefore comes as no surprise that all the countries at the bottom of the Report's Human Development Index (HDI) are from sub-Saharan Africa, where most countries have recorded disastrous growth records during the 1990s.¹¹⁸ Most of these countries have indeed failed in their efforts at development. The key task therefore in any conflict prevention effort is to help these countries thwart their economic failures and social breakdowns in order to achieve a balanced and equitable development which would remove the deep-seated distortions which are in part responsible for most of the conflicts afflicting these countries. But what kind of incentives? David Baldwin, in his *Economic*

¹¹⁵ See Elliot Berg, "African Adjustment Programs: False Attacks and True Dilemmas" and George B. N. Ayittey, "Why Structural Adjustment Failed in Africa," in Daniel M. Schydrowsky, ed., *Structural Adjustment: Retrospect and Prospect*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995. See also J. 'Bayo Adeganye, "Structural Adjustment, Democratization and Rising Ethnic Tensions in Africa," *Development and Change*, vol. 26 (1995), 335-374.

¹¹⁶ Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, New York: Columbia University, 1974, pp. 608-9.

¹¹⁷ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1999*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 36.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 164-167.

Statecraft, provides a list, albeit not exhaustive, of what constitutes incentives or “positive sanctions” as he labels them. These include:

- tariff discrimination
- granting “most-favored-nation” treatment
- tariff reduction
- direct purchase
- subsidies to exports or imports
- granting import/export licenses
- providing aid
- investment guarantees
- encouragement of private capital exports/imports
- taxation (favorable)
- promises of the above¹¹⁹

The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, introduced by the Clinton administration in the United States in 2000, is a good example of an incentive aimed at having a preventive effect in select African countries and falls within Baldwin’s list of positive sanctions. The act provides trade benefits to businesses, manufacturers and farmers in sub-Saharan African nations that have market-based economies and policies on reducing poverty, fighting corruption, protecting workers rights and fostering human rights – policies that are geared towards reducing tension in societies. In the fall of 2001, the Bush administration invited 35 sub-Saharan African countries to Washington under the Act, for a trade and economic forum focused on building ties between Washington and these nations and promoting stability and democracy in these select countries.

The purpose of these types of incentives is to change the structure of society and improve the economic and social well being of citizens. It should be noted, however, that the mere provision of such incentives is no guarantee that the intended effect will be achieved. William Long notes that certain conditions have to be present in both the

sender and recipient countries. In the sender, there has to be a strong market power in the relevant goods or technologies, strong societal actors, and a favorable public opinion. The recipient must have a strong demand for the incentive goods, influential societal actors who will benefit economically from the incentives and a public opinion that attaches a positive meaning to the incentives.¹²⁰

Among Baldwin's list, one incentive that stands out is *foreign aid*. Consistent with Alexander George's "pure" incentive referred to earlier, foreign aid is one of the incentives that could be given without any 'strings' attached and probably without having to meet Long's conditions in both sender and recipient countries. Commenting on the decline of foreign aid both in the United States and other major OECD countries, Cortright argues that while it is easy for critics to dismiss foreign aid as an inefficient and unpopular foreign policy tool, such a decline has very negative consequences and is a "form of unilateral disarmament that takes away a vital instrument of policy."¹²¹ According to Hans Morgenthau, the United States has interests abroad that cannot be secured by any other tool except foreign aid. A lack of it therefore means that American objectives cannot be supported at all. Indeed, for Morgenthau, foreign aid is one of the "weapons in the political armory of the nation."¹²²

Even though there is no guarantee that foreign aid and other incentives will eliminate violence from society, one cannot but agree with the Carnegie Commission's Report that "while there are no vaccines to immunize societies against violence, a number of

¹¹⁹ David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1985, p. 42.

¹²⁰ William J. Long, *Economic Incentives and Bilateral Cooperation*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996, p. 96.

¹²¹ Cortright, ed., *The Price of Peace*, p. 293.

¹²² Hans Morgenthau, "A Political Theory of Foreign Aid," *American Political Science Review* 56 (June 1962) cited in Cortright, ed., *The Price of Peace*, p. 293.

measures promote conditions that can inhibit its outbreak.”¹²³ This is consistent with Leatherman et al.’s argument that, in a world in which violence is often fueled by deep-seated economic and social inequalities, structural strategies of prevention - thwarting of economic failures, social breakdowns, and environmental degradation - are the most effective.¹²⁴ And it is also in consonance with Kevin Cahill’s assertion that the core of international policy “should be on long-term foreign assistance, conflict resolution and development programs that could prevent many disasters from happening in the first place.”¹²⁵

Thus the thrust of any preventive action at the pre-violence stage of the conflict cycle should be developmental and should focus more on the use of economic incentives as well as political instruments of diplomacy.

(iii) Political Instruments

Preventing conflicts, whether through the use of economic incentives or military coercion, invariably involves the use of political instruments. In fact, economic and military diplomacy/coercion necessarily have to be complemented by the use of political instruments if they are to have the desired effect. Unlike other forms of diplomacy, however, preventive political action is expected to be sophisticated while at the same time avoiding media visibility.¹²⁶

Gareth Evans is a leading advocate of this form of preventive action. He suggests that “preventive diplomacy missions should in general be informal, low-key, non-binding,

¹²³ Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report*, New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1997, p. 69.

¹²⁴ Leatherman et al., *Breaking Cycles of Violence*, p. 98.

¹²⁵ Kevin M. Cahill, “Introduction,” in Kevin M. Cahill, ed., *A Framework for Survival*, p. 7.

non-judgemental, non-coercive, and confidential.”¹²⁷ Evans’ approach differs sharply from the principles of forceful diplomacy in which the demonstration of vitality of interests involved, supported by military force, is said to have a key role. The leading advocate of such an approach is Alexander George in his *Forceful Persuasion: Coercive Diplomacy as an Alternative to War*. According to Leatherman et al., these two approaches differ because whilst Evans focuses on third-party actions, George looks at issues from the point of view of interstate relations.¹²⁸ Whilst Evans’ approach is said to be “elitist”, in situations where efforts are focused on preventing escalation so that conflict does not move beyond the pre-violence stage, sophistication and the avoidance of media visibility, as advocated by the “elitist” approach, are very important.

As noted earlier, political prevention complements other forms of preventive action and sometimes it is closely intertwined with both military and economic tools. In fact, the literature generally points to a wide range of instruments, which when closely examined are a combination of economic/military/political instruments. Boutros-Ghali’s classification includes confidence-building measures.¹²⁹ Lund on the other hand proposes the use of armed forces and restraints on it, the threat or use of military force, coercive and non-coercive diplomacy, economic development, promotion of human rights and good governance.¹³⁰

The issue of good governance in Lund’s classification deserves a brief discussion since little doubt exists about the relationship between bad governance and conflict in Africa. The way a country is governed is an indicator of social unrest or the lack of it.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 115.

¹²⁷ Gareth Evans, “Cooperative Security and Intrastate Conflict, *Foreign Policy* 96: 3-20, pp. 14-17.

¹²⁸ Leatherman et al., p. 115.

Zartman is right when he observes that: "Governing a state is not only the prevention of violent conflict from destroying the country; it is the continual effort to handle the ordinary conflicts among groups and their demands which arise as society plays its role in the conduct of normal politics."¹³¹

Again, Michael Brown reminds us, the prospects for conflict in a country, to a large extent depend on the type and fairness of the political system in place. Closed as well as authoritarian systems are likely to generate considerable resentment over time, especially if the interests of some ethnic groups are served while others are trampled.¹³² Thus, the importance of promoting good governance as part of a political preventive strategy cannot be over-emphasized.

Leatherman et al. classify political tools of preventive action based on their degree of institutionalization. At one end of the spectrum are ad hoc visits by fact-finding and monitoring missions as well as teams whose duty it is to gather information and make proposals for further action. At the other end are institutional mechanisms that systematically try to contain potential conflict from escalating into violence. These include arms control agreements and permanent field missions, as well as demilitarized and nuclear-free zones.¹³³

Given the history of conflict out-breaks around the world, Africa in particular, ad hoc measures will not do the job if conflicts have to be effectively prevented. Institutionalization of preventive instruments is the key to any success. Evans makes one

¹²⁹ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peace-making and Peacekeeping*, New York: The United Nations, 1992, pp. 13-19.

¹³⁰ Michael Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflict*, pp. 203-205.

¹³¹ I. William Zartman, "Introduction," in I. William Zartman, ed., *Governance as Conflict Management: Politics and Violence in West Africa*, Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution Press, 1997, p. 1

¹³² Michael E. Brown, "Introduction," in Michael E. Brown, ed., *International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, 1996, p. 16

of the far-reaching proposals in this regard. In arguing for the establishment of conflict prevention units, he proposes that such units should have “adequate resources and infrastructure, with appropriate back-up personnel and equipment.” In addition, preventive teams should visit trouble spots “on a regular and routine basis... to identify emerging disputes, to track developments in existing disputes, to gain an in-depth understanding of these dispute, to develop a sense of trust and a reputation for fairness, to urge the parties to come to the negotiating table and to offer a range of dispute resolution options.” Further, the establishment of regional peace and security resource centers in various parts of the world must complement these efforts.¹³⁴ Based on the preceding discussion, I developed a summarized table below.

Table 1.4: Strategies and their impact over three time frames

Strategy	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
Political Diplomacy <i>Preventive political action</i>	Useful	Useful	Counter-productive
<i>Forceful Diplomacy</i>	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful
Military <i>Peacekeeping</i> <i>Peace Enforcement</i>	Useful	Useful	Counter-productive
Economic <i>Inducements</i> <i>Sanctions</i>	Useful Counter-productive	Useful Somewhat useful	Counter-productive Useful

¹³³ Leatherman et al., p. 115.

¹³⁴ Gareth Evans, *Cooperating for Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond*, Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1993, pp. 71-76.

VI. Hypotheses

Based on the preceding discussion, five specific hypotheses will be explored. These will give us some indication about the conditions under which conflicts are likely to be prevented.

Hypothesis 1. There is a relationship between early warning and conflict prevention such that the earlier the warning, the better the outcome. More specifically, it is postulated that if early warning is to have a positive impact on the outcome of preventive efforts:

- H1a. there have to be effective indicators, methods, and information systems for identifying latent conflicts;
- H1b. the information gathering system has to be well coordinated;
- H1c. the strengths of the various information gatherers should be harnessed so that information is gathered in the quickest way possible; and
- H1d. the information gathered has to be properly analyzed and packaged for policy makers.

Hypothesis 2. There is a relationship between timing and conflict prevention such that if conflict is to be prevented, third parties have to intervene at the pre-violence stage of conflict

Hypothesis 3. There is a relationship between timing and strategy that affects outcome, such that:

- H3a. intervention at pre-violence stage with economic and political strategy is likely to result in successful conflict prevention ;
- H3b. intervention at the pre-violence stage with a military strategy is likely to result in limited or short-term success but failure in the long run; and
- H3c. intervention beyond the pre-violence stage with political, economic and military strategies is likely to produce a failed outcome.

Hypothesis 4. There is a relationship between timing and strategy that affects outcome, such that:

- H4a. mixed strategies are likely to produce a better outcome; and
- H4b. single strategies are likely to produce a poor outcome.

Hypothesis 5. The chances for preventing conflict are better if there is a close collaboration between the UN/International community and regional, sub-regional and local organizations.

VII. Case Studies

As noted earlier, the methodological approach adopted in this study is the comparative method using the “most similar systems” design. Apart from their similarities and differences at the same time, a number of other criteria were taken into consideration in the selection of cases to be included in this study. First, the nature of conflicts. The case sets include only intra-state conflicts. Beginning from the late 1980s, intra-state conflicts have become a principal threat to peace and security around the globe.¹³⁵ The devastating consequence of such conflicts is too evident – widespread destruction, state collapse, regional instabilities, and a heavy toll on civilian populations. There is no place where such effects are felt more than in Africa, which accounts for almost half of recent intra-state conflicts raging around the globe,¹³⁶ and where almost all conflicts but for that between Ethiopia and Eritrea are internal. Accordingly, internal conflicts deserve more attention if we are to become better equipped to avert them.

The second consideration is geographic. I selected cases from West, Central and Southern Africa in order to broaden the depth of our analysis. Given that there is no sub-region of sub-Saharan Africa that is untouched by the scourge of conflicts, it is fitting to have a set of cases that cuts across regions so as to be able to make generalizations that have wide application. In addition, in recent times, many regional economic organizations in Africa have, by necessity, extended their mandate to incorporate security issues because of the prevalence of conflicts in many parts of the continent. Including

¹³⁵ See for example, Peter Wallensteen and Margareta Sollenberg, “After the Cold War: Emerging Patterns of Armed Conflict 1989-94,” *Journal of Peace Research* 32, 3, 1995, pp. 345-60.

¹³⁶ See Peter Wallensteen & Margareta Sollenberg, “Armed Conflict, 1989-98,” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 36, 5, 1999, pp. 593-606, note 3 above.

cases from three different regions of Africa affords us an opportunity to examine the variable impact of various regional organizations on conflicts in their regions.

Third, and most importantly, we considered cases of state collapse. State collapse has become a common phenomenon in Africa – from Somalia to Sierra Leone and from Algeria to Angola, most states are simply failing to deliver; they virtually have no functioning institutions. According to Zartman, state collapse “refers to a situation where the structure, authority (legitimate power), law, and political order have fallen apart and must be reconstituted in some form, old or new.”¹³⁷ To this, we can add five factors that have been associated with collapsed states: “economic mal-performance, lack of social synergy, authoritarianism, militarism and environmental degradation caused by rampant population growth.”¹³⁸ It should be noted that even with the above categorization, some states have a higher degree of collapse than others. Thus, using concrete categories, Jean-Germain Gros has put failed states in five different categories – the anarchic state, where there is no centralized government whatsoever; the phantom state, where a semblance of authority exists; the anaemic state, where the state’s energy has been sapped by counter-insurgency; the captured state, where authority exists but is captured by members of insecure elites to frustrate rival elites; and aborted states, where there was failure even before the process of state formation was consolidated.¹³⁹ At the height of their respective crises, most of the cases examined in this thesis fit into one or another of the above noted categories.

¹³⁷ I. William Zartman, “Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse,” in I. William Zartman, ed., *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1995, p. 1.

¹³⁸ Jean-Germain Gros, “Towards a taxonomy of failed states in the New World Order: decaying Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and Haiti,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 17, 3, 1996, p. 462.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 458-461.

Finally, even though it is difficult to identify cases of pure success in preventive diplomacy in Africa, we managed to isolate cases in which there was some level of success in averting all-out violence. Thus, our case set includes both failures and those of 'some' level of success. Rwanda and Liberia represent cases of policy failure both at the international and regional levels, whilst Lesotho and Central African Republic represent cases of some 'success' in conflict prevention.

Rwanda, for example, is important in its own respect. It is case not only of civil war, but one of the greatest tragedies since the Holocaust. It represents a case where both international and local actors failed to pay attention to mounting evidence pointing towards genocide. There were clear warning signals beginning from independence in 1962 that the majority Hutu group was planning to liquidate the minority Tutsi group. In the months leading to the 'final act' even bureaucrats at the United Nations refused to pay heed to warnings of an impending genocide. In the end, about 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus lost their lives. Thus, the magnitude of this tragedy deserves a careful study by peace and security scholars if such tragedies are to be prevented in the future. The analysis will be limited to a timeframe covering events up to the genocide in April 1994.

Liberia is important because it symbolizes a growing trend in Africa where warlords, without any clear political agenda and driven by greed, lead poorly disciplined insurgencies of alienated youth and child soldiers. In the last two years, the United Nations and the international community have been struggling to get a handle on the political economy of war by tightening the grip on both the demand and supply of 'conflict diamonds' as well as other precious resources that fuel wars in Africa. Liberia

is a clear instance in which warlords use funds from the resources they loot to finance the war effort. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), with the help of unscrupulous foreign businesses, looted Liberia's resources and robbed her chances for development as both local and international actors either watched 'unconcerned' or got involved 'ill-prepared.' Studying this case is therefore very important if policymakers are to get a handle on the menace of warlords as well as the political economy of war. The analysis of Liberia will cover events/activities leading up to the 1989 civil war and the various forms of interventions to deal with that crisis – up to the 1997 elections.

In sharp contrast to these two cases of failure, both the Central African Republic and Lesotho represent instances in which there was a very quick and active local involvement with some international assistance to quell rebellions that had the potential to escalate into full-scale violence, albeit not without some casualties. The analysis of the Central African Republic is limited to events/activities leading up to the 1996 crisis and regional/international efforts to prevent its escalation. In the case of Lesotho, the analysis is focused on events/activities leading up to the 1998 crisis and the intervention of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) under the leadership of South Africa to prevent the crisis from escalating.

Methodologically, these sets of cases can help generate strong hypotheses and plausible statements of causality regarding how prevention works when certain variables are involved. It should be noted, however, that I do not pretend that the cases examined in this thesis are representative of the full range of case of conflict in Africa nor do they fully reflect the experiences of all African states in the area of conflict prevention. Nonetheless, they may be particularly instructive given their coverage: they represent

West, Central, and Southern Africa and they constitute countries with varying colonial experiences – British, French, German/Belgian and “American.”

In spite of this limitation, the cases have been carefully selected to help in understanding what accounts for the few exceptions in conflict prevention efforts on the continent in the hope that the experiences of those countries might serve as good lessons for policy makers as they engage in the difficult task of preventing conflicts both in Africa and elsewhere.

Having set out the theoretical framework, the study will now examine the case studies. Chapter two is a case study of the failure of conflict prevention in Rwanda. Chapter three is yet another case of failure of conflict prevention – Liberia. Chapters four and five – Lesotho and Central African Republic respectively – represent the two cases of limited success in conflict prevention. The concluding chapter pulls together the arguments of the various chapters and makes some policy recommendations.

Chapter Two

CASE 1: RWANDA

Introduction

In April 1994, Rwanda, a tiny Central African country was hit by a tragedy on a scale and swiftness never seen by the world since the Holocaust. Rwanda shocked the world with a human-engineered catastrophe, very much unlike most of the conflicts raging on in Africa at the time – it was genocide at the end of the twentieth century. Hutu extremists slaughtered between 500,000 and 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Rwanda's fate was not an act of sudden irrational lunacy. The genocide was indeed planned for a period spanning more than two decades, the closure of which came in April 1994. And before the genocide, there have been successive massacres of Tutsis beginning from the early 1960s. What is puzzling is how no serious attention was paid to these successive massacres which seemed to signal the changing of power structure in Rwanda following independence.

Against this background, the purpose of this chapter is two fold. First, the analytical framework developed in the first chapter will be used to analyze the Rwandan conflict from a preventive perspective. I classify the history of Rwanda in terms of structural root causes of the conflict, the accelerators and finally the triggers of the genocide. Second, and following from the first point, I will engage in an analysis of the crisis with the aim matching theory with practice in order to understand why the genocide could not be prevented.

The central argument of this chapter is that, for many decades, there were series of warning signals which could have been taken advantage of to prevent the 1994 genocide.

But Rwandans, Africa and world watched while millions were slaughtered. It is worth understanding what happened in Rwanda not because there has never been anything like it since the holocaust but because it shows how the international community is still unprepared to confront atrocities that ridicule the noble ideal for which the United Nations was formed – to ensure that never in the history of world will another holocaust be permitted.

The chapter like the next two, is divided into four sections. The first part examines the history of Rwanda. Examining Rwandan history is important otherwise it will impossible to understand the sequence of events culminating in genocide in 1998. The second part of the chapter is basically analytical. In that section, I examine the warning signals from three perspectives: long-term structural, medium-term and triggers (see independent variable I in chapter one, page 31). In this section, I next examine the strategies employed in dealing with the crisis. The third part of the chapter evaluates the hypotheses generated in the first chapter. The final concluding section highlights the key findings of the chapter.

1: History and the Structural Conditions for Genocide

The purpose of this section is to present the history of Rwanda in conceptual terms using Ryan's conflict cycle discussed in the first chapter. This approach will lay out the history in terms of the typical cycle of a conflict, it will be argued the history of Rwanda began with what can be described as the structural causes of the genocide which would take place four decades after independence. The importance of such an approach lies in helping to develop the argument with regards to early warning in Rwanda – the fact that

there was no shortage of warning, but rather a shortage of action. This fits within the framework that I developed in the Chapter one because it shows how difficult it is to prevent conflict once the conflict goes beyond the pre-crisis threshold. Accordingly, the thesis of this section is that the seeds of the Rwandan genocide were sown in the pre-Independence period of the country's history and reinforced by the policies of post-Independence government of Juvenal Habyarimana.

An analysis of the Rwandan conflict begins with the pre-colonial history and the eventual politics of ethnic construction implemented by colonial powers in Rwanda. Rwanda is made up of two main ethnic groups – Hutu and Tutsi. The division of the Rwandan society into these two groups is a subject of debate. While “Hutu extremists” argue that the two groups are completely different from one another, the Tutsis are of the view that the two are Banyarwanda and speak the same language and share the same culture. According to this latter view, Rwandans are driven apart not by differences in language, culture, etc., but by the “politicization of ethnicity” which began during the second half of the 19th century and was reinforced by colonialism.¹⁴⁰ Most historians are of the view that the first inhabitants of Rwanda were the small minority Twa group (i.e. ‘indigenes’). Later, the “Hutu” - peasants - and the “Tutsi” - cattle-herders - arrived. These groups eventually lived side by side in a patchwork of small chiefdoms and principalities.¹⁴¹ Probably because of their “wealth” the “Tutsi” achieved political dominance and formed the elite in Rwanda. It is important to note that this ‘elite formation’ by the Tutsi, who constitute the minority, and to understand the Hutu-Tutsi divide, in order to properly grasp the events leading up to the 1994 genocide.

¹⁴⁰ African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, revised edition, London: African Rights, 1995, pp. 1-2.

Consider for example, the action taken by the Tutsi king Mwami Rwabugiri to build indigenous social and political structures before the onset of colonialism. He instituted the *uburetwa* - labor in return for access to land - a system mainly restricted to those categorized as “Hutu.” In addition, King Rwabugiri manipulated social categories by introducing an “ethnic” differentiation between Tutsi and Hutu based on historical social positions.¹⁴² These were reinforced by colonialism.

Rwanda was first colonized by Germany and then later Belgium, which eventually granted her independence. The German colonial rule stretched from 1899 to 1916, whilst the Belgians ruled Rwanda from 1916 until Independence in 1961. When the Germans arrived in Rwanda, they strengthened the traditional structures that were in place by exercising power through the native chiefs under a policy of indirect rule. The German colonial rule reinforced the Tutsi hegemony by presiding over a system under which political and administrative authority was in the hands of the aristocratic Tutsi overlords.¹⁴³ Operating under the so-called “Hamitic thesis”¹⁴⁴ the administrative policy of the German colonial administration “culminated in 1933 with the introduction of compulsory identity cards, reinforcing and accelerating the late pre-colonial process towards a separation of Tutsi and Hutu.”¹⁴⁵ This latter act marked the beginning of what became known as the policy of “ethnogenesis” – a politically motivated creation of ethnic

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁴² Lennar Wohlgemuth and Tor Sellstrom, “Historical Perspective: Some Explanatory Factors,” in John Eriksson, *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience: Synthesis Report*, Copenhagen: Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, 1996, p. 13.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ The “Hamitic hypothesis” is a racial theory which holds that all forms of civilization in “negroid” Africa were brought there by the “Hamitic” race – the lowest branch of the Aryan or Caucasoid race. The significance of this hypothesis within the Rwandan context is that fact it linked physical characteristics to intelligence and character – those who more closely resembled Europeans were naturally considered superior and fit to rule. The Tutsi were considered as the Hamitic race in Rwanda under the colonial system. For a discussion on this, see African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁴⁵ John Eriksson, p. 13.

identities based on socially constructed categories of the pre-colonial past.¹⁴⁶ Gerard Prunier described the effect of German colonialism in the following words:

The German presence was structurally essential since it inaugurated a colonial policy of indirect rule, which left considerable leeway to the Rwandese monarchy and acted in direct continuation of the pre-colonial transformation towards more centralisation, annexation of the Hutu principalities and increase in Tutsi chiefly power.¹⁴⁷

The German presence, even though short (1896-1916), had the net effect of further strengthening the Tutsi-Hutu divide, and pitching the Tutsi against the Hutu. The Tutsi, who were the minority had access to economic and political power at the expense of the majority Hutu, who constituted the have-nots.

During the First World War, Germany was forced to retreat from Rwanda after which the Belgians came in. The Belgian administration was made possible in 1916 thanks to a military conquest, which was eventually sanctioned by a League of Nations Mandate in 1919.¹⁴⁸ While the initial years of the Belgian administration were those of ‘wait and see’, the real colonial policy was implemented in a series of measures between 1926 and 1931. These measures came to be referred to as ‘les reformes Voisin’ – after Charles Voisin, the then governor.¹⁴⁹ On the basis of such a policy, it might be fair to say that even before the end of colonialism, Rwanda was in a pre-conflict stage; with the majority Hutus resenting both the colonial powers and their favorites – the Tutsis.

Adopting a policy direction similar to the German administration, and in a bid to reinforce the “Hamitic thesis”, one of the key policies implemented by Governor Voisin was to concentrate traditional power into a single hand – the hand of the Tutsis. Under

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 25.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

the Rwandan traditional system, on any given hill, there had been three types of chiefs, who each answered to the King, who was always a Tutsi. The three were: *the mutwale wa buttaka* – responsible for landholdings; *the mutwale wa ingabo* – the chief of men; and the *mutwale wa inka* or *mutwale wa igikingi* – the chief who ruled over the grazing lands.¹⁵⁰ Before Voisin, at least one of these positions was always held by a Hutu so as to create a balance between the Hutu and Tutsi. What Voisin did was to fuse all these three positions into one and give this position to a Tutsi, thus eliminating any Hutu influence.

Another radical policy adopted by the Belgians was strict categorization of the various groups based on the ownership of cows – a measure of wealth in Rwanda at the time. During a census in 1933-34, anyone with ten or more cows was Tutsi and those with less than ten cows were Hutu. Mgr Classe, the first Bishop of Rwanda, credited with shaping the ideology of colonial rule in Rwanda as a key advisor to the Belgian colonial administration, noted that:

[T]he term ‘Tutsi’ often refers not to the origin but to social condition, or wealth, especially as regards cattle: whoever is a chief, or is rich will often be referred to as Tutsi. Frequently also, because of their manner or their language... the inhabitants of the provinces of central Rwanda... are referred to as Tutsi.¹⁵¹

Such a classification is absurd by all standards but it perfectly served the policies of the Belgian colonial administration, which was engaged in reinforcing the stereotypes that had been initiated by Rwandans themselves and subsequently embraced by the Germans.

Given the haphazard and absurd nature of determining who was Hutu and who was Tutsi, the Belgian colonial administration decided to find a more convenient method of

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

classifying Rwandans. Once a clear and consistent method was established, the Belgians would be able to clearly identify their favorites - the Tutsi - for the various national prizes that were available – jobs, education, etc. In a move akin to Nazi policy during the Second World War, the Belgians, in the 1930s, initiated a policy of registering all Rwandans under a ‘card system’, by which all adult Rwandans were issued with an identity card. This label was what determined whether one was Hutu or Tutsi. According to Allison Des Forges, “Some 15 percent of the population declared themselves Tutsi, approximately 84 percent said they were Hutu, and the remaining 1 percent said they were Twa.”¹⁵²

Without doubt, such a policy had the tendency of making people lie about their identity so as to be able to carry an identity that would be of benefit to them. This is especially true given the fact that Rwandan colonial history favored the Tutsi over the Hutu. As Des Forges has rightly noted,

The establishment of written registration did not completely end changes in group affiliation. In this early period Hutu who discovered the advantages of being Tutsi sometimes managed to become Tutsi even after the records had been established, just as others more recently have found ways to erase their Tutsi origins.¹⁵³

In the end, a system, unfair by every standard, was created in Rwanda during the colonial administrations; and the negative consequences of such a system were to be borne by the people of Rwanda many decades down the road. Thus, what is clear from Rwanda’s colonial history is the fact that the Germans and later the Belgians pursued a policy of ‘ethnic construction’ which became rigid, politicized and hardened after the

¹⁵¹ Catherine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, p. 12, cited in African Rights: *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, p. 9

¹⁵² Allison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*, New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999, p. 37.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, pp. 37-8.

1930s, albeit occasionally manipulated by certain elements of the population. In the end these racial policies divided a people who had peacefully lived together for many years into what became known as Hutus and Tustis. As noted earlier, it be should made clear that the colonial powers were not solely responsible for the politics of ‘ethnic construction’ in Rwanda. It was a policy that was initiated by the Tutsi elites, notably King Rwabugiri, and later reinforced by the colonial powers because it perfectly served their interest. As the OAU report, *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide* rightly noted, “virtually all authorities (including both Hutu and Tutsi) agree that first Germany, but above all Belgium, organized the colony very much along the lines that Mwami Rwabugiri had drawn, though the colonizers made those lines far more rigid, inflexible, and self-serving.”¹⁵⁴

In the 1950s, faced with mounting pressure from the United Nations, the Belgian colonial administration initiated a policy clearly inconsistent with the past: they began giving the Hutu opportunities to participate in public life. Under this policy, several Hutus were appointed to responsible positions and given access to the country’s educational system.¹⁵⁵ This policy shift, even though not satisfactory to the Hutu, alarmed the Tutsi who feared that, the more Independence was delayed, “the more likely it was that the Belgians would bequeath a system of government which would entail Hutu majority rule.”¹⁵⁶ Their fears proved correct.

In 1962, during the wave of African independence, Rwanda gained political Independence and the ‘tables begun to turn.’ The Hutus gained access to political power

¹⁵⁴ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide – The Report of the International Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and the Surrounding Events*, www.oau-oua.org/Document/ipep/report/rwanda, chapter 2, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ See for example, Allison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p. 38.

in Kigali and started planning the total elimination of the Tutsis, who were labeled as 'dangerous snakes.' The first Tutsi massacres begun around 1960 when more than 20,000 Tutsis were killed and more than 100,000 were pushed into exile in neighboring Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and Zaire – these refugees eventually became 'liberators'. Tutsis who remained in Rwanda were confined to ghettos and systematically discriminated against and those in exiled were refused re-settlement in Rwanda by the post-colonial Hutu governments in Rwanda.

In sum, the history of Rwanda, particularly during the various colonial administration, was one that put in place inequitable social conditions/structures which created conditions for conflict that were suppressed for many years until the situation began to unravel with the onset of triggers in the 1980s and early 1990s. Thus, colonial and post-colonial Rwanda, up to the genocide, were periods during which an unworkable and very dangerous formula for sharing political, social and economic power was put in place.

As I noted at the beginning of this thesis, the principal focus is on conflict prevention. Having done a brief review of the history of Rwanda and the events that subsequently opened the road to genocide, it is appropriate at this point to apply the framework developed in the first chapter to this case. It is evident from the preceding discussions that the history of Rwanda by itself is one that lends itself to continuous tension between Hutus and Tutsis. Added to this are the various events/incidents after independence that were outlined in the discussion above, all of which point toward an impending explosion of ethnic tension. While no one could dismiss the possibility of conflict in Rwanda, when it was going to occur and what its intensity would be were two issues that policymakers could either not grasp or simply ignored.

¹⁵⁶ *African Rights, Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, p. 10.

II: Analysis

The purpose of this analytic section is to examine to what extent theory corresponds with practice. This case study will be evaluated using the theoretical framework developed in the first chapter. Integrating theory with history will help shed light on the relationship between the independent variables – early warning, timing, and strategies – and the dependent variable – prevention.

(a) Warning Signals

Rwanda demonstrates what can be achieved and how many lives could be saved if there is a genuine concerted effort to prevent a conflict from escalating. For many years, opportunities to prevent conflict escalation and genocide were missed. For one thing, Rwanda demonstrated the limitations of early warning if it isn't matched by the appropriate response, and in good time.

There is the usual argument that when it comes to dealing with conflicts in Africa, especially since Somalia, the international community, particularly big Western powers with the capacity to mount an effective intervention, shirk their responsibilities. Analysts such as Christopher Clapham do not agree with such an assertion. He is of the view that the claim of negligence on the part of the international community in handling the Rwandan crisis can scarcely be made. He notes that the international community, led by the Organization of African Unity, took an active role in negotiating a solution at a very early stage of the crisis.¹⁵⁷

The evidence available turns Clapham's argument on its head. True, there was a lot of engagement, but to what end? Intervening half-heartedly is sometimes as good as no

¹⁵⁷ Clapham, "Rwanda: The Perils of Peacemaking," p. 200.

engagement at all, since it is tantamount to occupying the space and preventing those willing, if any, to act. In particular, the timing of most of the interventions – diplomatic, military and economic - was poor. Decisive action, where it was taken, was taken after the fact. In chapter one, the argument was advanced that conflicts pass through a life cycle and the stage most conducive to preventive intervention is the *pre-crisis* stage. If we divide the Rwandan crisis into two - the 1990 civil war and the 1994 genocide - there were clear warnings in both cases about the deteriorating nature of the political situation, yet no decisive actions were taken either prior to the civil war or the genocide.

From Independence to the days leading up to the genocide in 1994, Rwanda “was an accident waiting to happen.” There was a series of events, which pointed to the fact that the country was sitting on a time bomb. Whether these events were rightly read and interpreted is still a matter of debate. What is certain is the fact that there was no shortage of signals foretelling disastrous events to come.

The purpose of this section is to examine the various warning signals that were evident; signs that signalled the coming genocide. The discussion will not only be focused on unearthing these signals but will also highlight how they were (mis)understood. As indicated already, the roots of the crisis date back to the colonial period – from the late 1950s when the majority Hutu came to the limelight, during the last days of colonialism. With an unworkable power-sharing formula constructed by the colonial powers, the Hutus were bound to challenge the ‘status quo’ once they began to become active in national politics. The Tutsis were bound to reject any such challenge. This challenge and counter challenge was bound to set the two groups on a collision course.

Analytically, warning signals of the Rwandan crisis can be classified into long term structural factors, with links to the country’s history and the Hutu Revolution; medium term post-Independence policies; and short-term trigger factors, mainly the refugee problem leading to the 1990 RPF ‘invasion’ and the subsequent civil war. The first two represent the pre-crisis stage in our framework while the third was an escalation of the crisis. This is illustrated in the table below.

Table 2.1: Timelines of the Rwandan Crisis

Description	Time-line	Stage of Conflict
Long-term Structural Factors	Pre-independence to 1959	Pre-crisis
Habyarimana’ Policy of Exclusion	Early 1960s – 1990	Pre-crisis
RPF Invasion	Late 1990	Escalation

(i) Long Term Warning Signals

The attitude of the Belgian colonial administration in the late 1950s, when Rwanda was being prepared for Independence was, pathetic at best and conflict-provoking at worst. As I noted earlier, in the years leading up to Independence, because of pressure from outside, particularly from the United Nations, and most importantly because of fear of the fact that, inevitably, Independence would eventually be granted to Rwanda and, with that, the Hutus would be in control of political power, there was an about-turn in Belgian policy towards Rwandan. The Hutus, long regarded as backward and the underdogs of Rwandan politics, suddenly became the darlings of the colonial administration. This was mainly because the colonial powers knew very well that once colonialism ended and they were no more on the ground to keep a lid on Rwandan politics, the Hutus were going to

reject the colonial formula that had put the Tutsis in charge for many years. The colonial powers were quick to foresee that and, in order to continue to safeguard their interests in Rwanda, they began shifting their attention to the Hutus.

This policy shift had a number of implications for political relations in Rwanda. For one thing, it emboldened the Hutus into believing that they wielded a lot of political clout, with the colonial powers on their side. The Hutus probably felt that it was necessary and appropriate to take advantage of this new found 'supremacy' to revenge all the excesses they had received at the hands of the Tutsis. For the Tutsis, first, this policy shift pitted them against the Belgians who they saw as trying to take advantage of Rwandans in order to maintain their grip on power at all cost by giving recognition to groups as and when it favored their political agenda. Second, the Tutsis now became fully aware of what awaited them with the Hutus in control. Thus, beginning from the late 1950s, the Tutsis knew that it was only a matter of time before their Hutu counterparts would get rid of them, not only from the positions of power that they occupied in Rwanda, but from Rwanda completely.

Emboldened by their new found superiority occasioned by the shift in allegiance by Belgium, the Hutus embarked on a series of mass massacres of Tutsis in the years leading up to Independence. The worst of these massacres came during the 1959 Hutu revolution – the second warning signal.

In 1959, when the tables began to turn and when the Belgians started shifting their 'allegiance' from Tutsi to Hutu, that was the time of opportunity for Rwandan leaders to direct the affairs of the country towards peace. Indeed, many Rwandans trace the 1994

genocide to this period. A Rwandese woman, Odette Nyiramilimo, interviewed by Philip Gourevitch had this to say:

I was born in Kinunu, Gisenyi, in 1956. So I was three when this history of the genocide began. I can't remember it exactly, but I did see a group of men on the facing hill descending with machetes, and I can still see houses burning. We ran into the bush with our cows and stayed there for two months. So there was milk, but nothing else. Our house was burned to nothing.¹⁵⁸

Even though Odette is a Tutsi and will obviously give an account from a Tutsi perspective, one cannot dispute the fact that, just as in many African countries, if moderate leaders had emerged at the dawn of Independence, Rwanda's story some forty years down the road would have been different. The OAU report was unambiguous about Rwanda's formative years. The report notes that Rwanda

needed to enter a bold new era of independence under vigorous leadership that would reflect the actual make-up of the country, with a democratic government, guaranteed rights for both the majority and the minority, a national identity that would take precedence over ethnic loyalties, and a commitment to public policies that would benefit all Rwandan citizens. None of this happened.¹⁵⁹

In fact, instead of a vigorous leadership that reflected the make-up of Rwanda and guaranteed the rights of all, what happened was a 'witch-hunt.' In 1959, under the banner of the *Partie de l'Emancipation du Peuple Hutu (PARMEHUTU)*.¹⁶⁰ Hutu leaders instigated a series of riots which targeted not only the authority of the Tutsi chiefs, but also the lives of educated Tutsi elites, leading to a revolution that claimed the lives of more than 20,000 Tutsis. This revolution, with tacit Belgian consent, dealt a final heavy blow to Tutsi leadership.¹⁶¹ According to Alain Destexhe,

¹⁵⁸ Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories From Rwanda*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998, p. 63.

¹⁵⁹ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide*, chapter 3, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ Party for the Emancipation of the Hutu People.

¹⁶¹ See for example, Alain Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, New York: New York University Press, 1994, pp. 43-44 and African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, pp. 10-12.

The 1959 revolution represented a turning point in the political history of Rwanda. It led to the exile of a large numbers of Tutsi, the exclusion of all Tutsi from the political life of the country and a growing authoritarianism practised by a Hutu power base that was becoming increasingly centralised.¹⁶²

Indeed, by the end of the 1950s and early 1960s, the Hutus have moved fast enough to get hold of the power base in Kigali and there were spontaneous violent clashes throughout Rwanda with the Tutsis mainly as the scapegoats. This period marked a progression in the pre-crisis stage of the genocide.

(ii) Medium Term Signals – Habyarimana’s Policy of Exclusion

The second early warning period is post-Independence (1960-1993), Habyarimana’s rise to power and prominence and its implication for ethnic relations in Rwanda. Thus, the post-independent era was a tense moment in Rwanda with Tutsis living daily in fear. Violence against Tutsis continued to grow by the day until Major-General Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, intervened and took over in a bloodless coup on July 5, 1973. The change of guard brought widespread relief, even among Tutsis whose security was guaranteed by the new regime.¹⁶³

Habyarimana tried to distance himself from the politics of the predecessor Hutu regime by adopting policies that rejected the ethnic divisive politics that had characterised Rwanda for a long time. He also adopted policies that focused on the need for economic development.¹⁶⁴ Habyarimana ruled Rwanda for 21 years until his death in a plane crash on April 6, 1994 triggered the Rwandan genocide. All but the last 4 years of his rule were relatively peaceful; even though Tutsis were kept at a distance from the

¹⁶² Alain Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁶³ Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p. 61.

¹⁶⁴ See for example, African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, pp. 13-14.

levers of power, they lived a normal life, relatively free of fear and intimidation. This implicit deal between Habyarimana and the Tutsi ensured that “physical harassment largely ceased and, for 17 years, there were no massacres of Tutsi.”¹⁶⁵

Even though under Habyarimana there was a ‘guaranteed no violence’ policy toward the Tutsi population, what the new regime did not do is to make an effort to change the structure of Rwandan society. True, there were extremist elements within the Hutu elite structure. However, the fact that it was possible to ensure non-violence against the Tutsi meant that opportunities existed for the leadership to slowly but cautiously begin cultivating an inclusive government. This was not the case. Commenting about Habyarimana’s regime, the OAU report lamented that:

During this period, much about Rwanda remained as it had been for some time. Identification cards, ethnic quotas, and spheres of exclusive ethnic concentration remained hallmarks of the society. Power at every level was still monopolized, now by the Hutu. There was neither a single Tutsi head of a prefecture nor a single Tutsi burgomaster until, curiously, the very end of the period. There was only a handful of Tutsi officers in the entire army, and officers were discouraged from marrying Tutsi women. One Tutsi held a seat in a Cabinet of 25 to 30 ministers, and two Tutsi sat in a Parliament of 70 members.¹⁶⁶

What was worse, Habyarimana established a dictatorship under a one-party system. His party - the Mouvement Revolutionnaire National pour le Developpement (MRND) - became the only party recognized under the constitution. This party became a symbol of dictatorship with all political officials chosen from within its ranks. The system was designed such that for one to make headway politically, and by implication, economically, one had to belong to the MRND. Consequently, “the party was everywhere, from the very top of the government hierarchy to its very base.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide*, chapter 4, p. 1.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Habyarimana and the Hutu elites at the helm of the MRND were obsessed with maintaining a tight grip on Rwanda, probably because of the colonial experience and the Tutsi factor.

This is understandable if Rwanda's experience is put within the African context at the time. In the early 1960s, the period immediately following the attainment of Independence by most African countries, many African leaders imposed a single-party system on their citizens with the justification that this was the only real way to achieve genuine democracy and bring their people together to forge a sense of common citizenship. This was true under Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Félix Houphouët Boigny of Ivory Coast, and Sékou Touré of Guinea to mention just a few. The best known political structure of this shade, and one that endured for a long period, was Julius Nyerere of Tanzania's Ujama – African socialism. While not justifying and glorifying dictatorship, it is interesting to note that most of these countries did not go through an experience similar to that of Rwanda under colonial rule - Tutsis pitted against Hutus - yet they felt the need to put a firm grip on their people in the name of democracy and national unity. It is therefore not surprising for Habyarimana to have come up with the idea of one-party rule in a country that was terribly divided "racially" at independence. What he should have done, however, was to have formed an all-inclusive government even under a single party system.

Many years into his regime, Habyarimana was no different from his predecessors – Kabyanda and the colonial authorities. The structure of the Rwandan society was still the same. The only thing that had changed was the leadership. Indeed, one would not be wrong to argue that Habyarimana's policies were cosmetic and short-lived. According to

African Rights, under a policy of “balance” aimed at distributing resources equitably between groups and regions, Habyarimana created “imbalance” reminiscent of the previous regimes. The policy was not only used to discriminate against Tutsis, but also Hutus who did not hail from the north-west, Habyarimana’s home and the supposed “blessed region.”¹⁶⁸ Habyarimana’s policies, first seen as moderate and conciliatory, complicated the Rwandan situation since the power struggle was now not just between Hutu, but also between Tutsi and Hutu and Hutu.

What was alarming was the fact that the hierarchy of the Catholic church (Rwanda is predominantly Catholic) was firmly behind the Habyarimana regime to the extent that the archbishop of Kigali, Mgr. Vincent Nsengiyumva, became an active member of the central committee of the MRND and the personal confessor of the President’s wife; it is said that he always carried Habyarimana’s portrait in his cassock. In 1989, Rome ordered him to resign from the central committee, a move aimed at drawing the line between Church and State, a line that had been blurred by the activities of religious leaders such as Nsengiyumva.¹⁶⁹

Even though Habyarimana’s reign was not completely different from those before him, he was moderate in certain respects. The international community, especially countries that had close ties with Rwanda - the European powers, Belgium, Germany and France - could have played on the moderate qualities in him to effect change in Rwanda. This was also true with the World Bank as well as many aid agencies which were actively engaged in Rwanda from the mid 1980s to early 1990s. Under the watchful eye of these

¹⁶⁸ African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, p. 14.

¹⁶⁹ See, Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, pp. 83 & 132; and *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide*, chapter 4, p. 2.

actors, the Habyarimana regime pursued a dangerous policy of division, exclusion, and de-humanization.

Nationalist media manipulation was also a centerpiece of the Habyarimana regime's ploy to dehumanize Tutsis and assert "Hutu power" in Kigali.¹⁷⁰ Before the genocide President Habyarimana and Hutu extremists used their control of the mass media to create a propaganda machine feeding on Hutu fears of Tutsi elites. The Rwandan Hate Radio - Radio Television Libre des Milles Collines (RTLHC) - established by Habyarimana's wife was responsible for demonizing the Tutsis and spreading the word that the latter were about to rise up and eliminate the Hutus. Investigative journalist Linda Melvern captured the essence of RTLHC:

The purpose of the new radio station was to prepare the people of Rwanda for genocide. A propaganda weapon unlike any other, its campaign was to demonize the Tutsi, and to circumvent key clauses in the Arusha Accords¹⁷¹ that barred both sides from incitement to violence and hate.¹⁷²

Radio broadcasts on RTLHC called on Hutus to get rid of the "snakes" (Tutsis) before they bite them (Hutus). The effect of this media manipulation was sufficient to anger Hutus and whip up their nationalist sentiments. This strategy was successful and contributed to the elimination of close to a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Commenting on these and other ethnic policies in Rwanda under Habyarimana and the reaction of the international community, the OAU report lamented that:

To our knowledge and to their shame, not a single aid agency ever challenged the government to change these practices. In its silence, the morally influential world of

¹⁷⁰ Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2, Fall 1996, p. 26; Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones, "Preventive Diplomacy in Rwanda: Failure to Act or Failure of Actions?" in Bruce W. Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized: Preventive Diplomacy in the Post-Cold War World*, Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000, p. 252.

¹⁷¹ The Arusha Accords is discussed in detail in the section on *Political Diplomacy* in this chapter.

¹⁷² Linda R. Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The role of the West in Rwanda's genocide*, London: Zed Books, 2000, p. 71.

international aid joined the Catholic church to legitimize the Habyarimana regime and made it easy, in turn, for the government to believe it could count on their blessings irrespective of its policies.¹⁷³

Like the actions of the Belgian colonial administration in the late 1950s, the attitude of the international community towards Habyarimana's excesses in the latter part of his regime emboldened the Hutu elite into believing that they could get away with any acts of violence meted out against the Tutsis. This probably explains why, for a long time, Habyarimana consistently refused to allow Tutsi refugees who had fled Rwanda the right to return and re-settle in Rwanda.

(iii) Triggers – RPF as Refugees and Invaders

The refugee problem and the RPF 'invasion' is the third and final warning signal which was ignored and which dealt a heavy blow to Rwanda and to the world. Towards the latter part of the Habyarimana regime, another warning signal of all that was wrong with the racially divided country began to 'rear its ugly head.' The effect of the post-Independence politics in Rwanda, which had forced a lot of Tutsis to flee into neighboring countries, was already beginning to be felt in Rwanda. Tutsi exiles had begun to mobilize themselves to stage a come back and demand a 'place in Rwandan politics.' Tutsis began fleeing persecution the moment the Belgian colonial administration switched its allegiance in the late 1950s and the flow continued even under Habyarimana. According to Gerard Prunier, the first flow of refugees in a continuous but irregular stream was between 1959 and 1964 and again during 1972-3.¹⁷⁴

By the mid 1970s, the breakdown was as follows:

¹⁷³ *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide*, p. 4.

¹⁷⁴ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, pp. 61-2.

Table 2.2: Refugee Flows from Rwanda (1959-1973)

Recipient Country	Numbers
Burundi	200,000
Uganda	78,000
Tanzania	36,000
Zaire	22,000 ¹⁷⁵

By the mid 1980s, the Tutsi refugee population in the diaspora had almost doubled, with most estimates putting the figure at about 600,000.¹⁷⁶ Running away from persecution and hoping to find a safe haven in neighboring countries, Tutsi exiles had a terrible experience living as refugees. The only country that welcomed them and gave them some limited rights and guarantees was Tanzania. The government of Tanzania, in association with the Lutheran World Federation and the UNHCR, set up settlements through which the refugees were quickly integrated into society. They were all eventually offered citizenship and most of them gladly accepted it.¹⁷⁷

This Tanzanian experience contrasts sharply with the reception they received in other countries. In Uganda, for example, thousands of Tutsi refugees were expelled and sent back to Rwanda in 1982 only to be expelled again from Rwanda.¹⁷⁸ Even in Burundi, Rwanda's closest neighbor and a country considered to be a mirror image of Rwanda, at least culturally, Tutsi refugees had to grapple with a lot of discrimination and lived on the margins of society.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁷⁶ See for example, Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, pp. 62-63; Andre Guichaoua, "Vers Deux Generations de Refugies Rwandais?" in Andre Guichaoua, ed., *Les Crises Politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda* (Lille: University des Sciences et Technologies de Lille, second edition, 1995, p. 343, cited in Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p. 48.

¹⁷⁷ African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁷⁸ Des Forges, p. 48.

¹⁷⁹ African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, pp. 25-26.

Faced with discrimination in the entire Great Lakes and with no prospects of being able to return safely to their homes, the Tutsi exiles formed a resistance movement – the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). In 1988, at a meeting in Washington D. C., Tutsi exiles under the umbrella of the RPF passed very strong resolutions about the ‘Right of Return’ and “affirmed their right to return home, by force if necessary.”¹⁸⁰ Meanwhile, the Habyarimana regime in Kigali, hiding behind the myth of over-population, insisted that the exiles had no place in Rwanda since there was no space to absorb them. They were therefore left with only one option – returning home by force. And they did not hesitate in exercising that option.

In making the decision to go back home by force, their objective was two-fold: the return of refugees and, obviously, the ouster of the government in Kigali – a necessary step for making it possible to resettle Tutsi refugees. Most of the leadership of the RPF was from the generation that had grown up in Uganda and learnt the art of war through fighting in Yoweri Museveni’s National Resistance Army (NRA) – a rebel group they helped to gain power in Uganda. Paul Kagame, the current president of Rwanda, was once the deputy head of military intelligence for Museveni’s NRA.¹⁸¹ In the early days of the RPF, Kagame was the commander of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), the armed wing of the RPF, with a force of about seven thousand under his command.¹⁸²

In October 1990, the RPF decided to strike. The attack on Rwanda began when a group of about fifty RPA men fired on Rwanda border guards at the border post of Kagitumba, killing one of the guards and overpowering the small detachment stationed there. Shortly afterwards, hundreds of RPA men clad in Ugandan army uniforms

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.; Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p. 74.

¹⁸¹ See for example, Alison Dew Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p. 48.

emerged from the bush and joined the attackers. Buoyed by this success and an increase in their number, the rebels headed for Kigali, the capital.¹⁸³ Rwanda's civil war had begun and so was the road to genocide opened wide. By the time of this attack, Habyarimana's grip on power had eroded considerably. He therefore saw the attack as an opportunity to rebuild his eroding power by calling on all Rwandans - both Hutus and Tutsis - to come and fight the 'enemy.'

What the RPF invasion succeeded in doing was to harden the already hostile attitude towards Tutsis in Rwanda. Thus, towards the end of Habyarimana's rule, there was growing evidence of extreme human rights abuses against Tutsis by people very close to his regime. "Network Zero" was the most notorious extremist group that had been built around the presidency. This group was alleged to be responsible for compiling death lists and plotting to exterminate those on the lists.¹⁸⁴

What is clear from the analysis of Rwandan case is the fact there was no shortage of early warning information. If a critical analysis of the massacres and treatment of the Tutsi population at the time of independence till the late 1980s was done, policymakers might have been able to predict with certainty that genocide might take place in Rwanda. But the lack of any serious analysis of the signals permitted policy makers, to this day, to argue that no one foresaw the Rwandan genocide. In fact, if the Rwandan crisis is plotted on a typical conflict life-cycle (see Ryan's classification in chapter 1), by the early 1990s, the situation had moved beyond the pre-crisis to the escalation stage of the conflict cycle.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ See for example, Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p. 49; Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*,

¹⁸⁴ Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones, "Preventive Diplomacy in Rwanda: Failure to Act or Failure of Actions?" in Bruce W. Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized*, p. 252.

The United Nations, the international community (former colonial masters of Rwanda, major western powers and neighboring Great Lakes states), and the Organization of African Unity either did not possess the capacity for analyzing any signals coming out of Rwanda, or were simply not interested in whatever happened to Rwanda, or were accomplices, especially in the case of Uganda. Most analysts are inclined to think and believe that it was not a case of lack of capacity to analyze early warning information and act on those analysis. Rather it was a case of simply refusing to be concerned. According to Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones,

The problem was not lack of information, and – compared to famous instances of misread signals in history, from the Zimmermann telegram in World War I to preparations for the attack on Pearl Harbor – there was in this case an abundance of overt information, accompanied by active lobbying to bring it to the attention of policymakers.¹⁸⁵

Indeed, there was not only overt information, there was also intense lobbying to bring the deteriorating situation in Rwanda to the attention of policymakers. How does one account for the futility of all these actions in Rwanda?

Astri Suhrke and Howard Adelman attribute the failure of early warning in Rwanda to a number of factors. First, they argue that the United Nations was in a poor shape to collect and flag information about the impending genocide. The organization does not have properly developed structures for collecting and analyzing early warning data. Even the newly developed inter-agency arrangement for early warning (HEWS) was specifically designed for humanitarian operations and as such is not suitable for collecting and analyzing political and military signals like those coming out of

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

Rwanda.¹⁸⁶ Following from this lack of proper structures, the UN is not in a position to draw on existing information sources in the Great Lakes and beyond from various Rights and Watch agencies, academic institutions and even the UN's own agencies.¹⁸⁷ Even in situations in which the UN is able to collect some information, there is a "disjuncture between information collection, analysis, and the development of strategic policy options."¹⁸⁸ Simply, the UN lacks a specialized unit devoted to analyzing early warning information and formulating strategic options based on those analyses, which can be forwarded directly to the Secretary-General.¹⁸⁹

The problem is not only limited to the UN. The other critical actor in the Rwandan debacle is the OAU. For a long time, the organization had been trying to set up a unit that is devoted to conflict prevention. In theory, such a unit existed but has virtually no capacity for conflict prevention. The unit was ill-equipped both in terms of financial and human resources to collect early warning data, analyze the data and formulate strategic options. Even if it is capable of collecting data and analyzing that data, it is still ill-equipped to follow through with whatever strategic options are formulated. Simply, it is incapable of acting on early warning information diplomatically, economically or militarily. This is partly because of the lack of resources and mainly because of the nature of politics within the OAU.

The OAU (now AU), like the UN, is an organization run by member states. It is indeed what the member states want it to be. In most cases, it is incapable of raising a finger against a member state, especially one that has a very close ties with some of the

¹⁸⁶ Astri Suhrke and Howard Adelman, "Early Warning and Conflict Management," in John Eriksson, *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide*, p. 21.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

major players within the organization. In addition, member states of the OAU usually are either directly involved in, or have some strategic interest in, some of the conflicts in Africa. Uganda is a good example in the case of Rwanda.

As for the international community, especially major Western powers, the least said about it the better. Commenting on the role of the international community in Rwanda, Canadian General Romeo Dallaire lamented that Rwanda was seen by the UN and the international community, especially the United States, as too difficult and not of sufficient interest and value to prevent the outbreak of violence, and once violence had broken out, it still was not of sufficient interest to warrant the expense of resources and risk of more casualties to stop the violence from spreading. While the international community remained focused on the world's other crises, the people of Rwanda were forgotten.¹⁹⁰

Even though Rwanda was one of the potential hot spots in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, the brewing crisis there did not attract the attention of the international community until well after the 1990 RPF invasion. The UN Security Council began expressing interest in the Rwandan crisis long after the October 1990 RPF invasion of Rwanda. The Security Council in its resolution 812 (1993) of 12 March 1993 did not go beyond simply 'urging' the two factions - the RPF and the government of Habyarimana - to respect the terms of the cease-fire brokered by the OAU.

The most serious disregard for early warning signals came when the UN had representation on the ground in Rwanda (UNAMIR) yet refused to pay heed to warnings

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Lieutenant-General Romeo A. Dallaire, 'Foreword' in Scott R. Feil, *Preventing Genocide: How the Early Use of Force Might Have Succeeded in Rwanda*, Report to the Carnegie Commission On Preventing Deadly Conflict, New York, 1998.

sent out by the officials of this mission, most especially, the infamous ‘fax’ from General Dallaire. If the previous warnings were considered ‘not credible’ and ‘misleading’ based on which no serious action can be taken, it is difficult for the UN Security Council to find excuses for not acting on information from its own representatives on the ground. The box below summarizes the warning signals that came out of Rwanda and from which analysts could have predicted the impending genocide.

Box 2.1: Signals of Genocide

1. Colonial legacy that created structural inequalities in the society
2. Habyarimana’s policy of reversing the colonial legacy which further entrenched inequalities in the society. It led to:
 - A one-party dictatorship sympathetic to the Hutu cause
 - The emergence of Hutu extremists
 - Persistent discrimination against Tutsis
 - The emergence of a Hate Radio used to demonize Tutsis and promote genocide
3. Trigger Factors
 - Tutsi refugees spread across the Great Lakes
 - The emergence of the RPF
 - The RPF invasion of 1990
 - The emergence of the Hutu extremist “Network Zero” to liquidate Tutsis
 - Persistent human rights violations against Tutsis

There were a number of actors who articulated one form of response or another to the signals catalogued above. These included the OAU, the UN and the international community - especially France, Belgium and the United States. The problem with their various approaches to finding a political settlement that could prevent a bloodbath was not a total lack of response, but a case of several half-hearted responses. The timing of all these responses was also problematic. In order for a response to produce the desired outcome, it should not only be properly organized and delivered, the timing above all

must be right. In the next section, I examine the various strategies employed by third parties and how they impacted on the genocide.

(b) Strategies

With our framework in mind, and in keeping with Ryan's classification, each phase of the conflict cycle requires a particular strategy or a set of strategies - the strategy to be adopted depends on the intensity of the conflict in question.

For instance, if third parties are intervening at the pre-crisis stage, the strategy will differ from the peak of the conflict. According to Ryan's classification, at the pre-crisis stage, effort is basically geared towards prevention. According to Lund, as noted already, at the pre-crisis stage of the conflict cycle, prevention can assume different forms: "crisis prevention" – efforts to bloc violent acts; "pre-emptive engagement" – getting parties to cooperate; and "pre-conflict peace building" – promoting dispute resolution¹⁹¹ - all efforts geared towards preventing escalation.

This section examines the various strategies employed by third parties. We review diplomatic, economic and military strategies and their impact on the course of peace in Rwanda.

(i) Political Diplomacy: The Arusha Talks

Intense diplomatic initiatives in Rwanda started in the aftermath of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invasion of Rwanda in 1990. President Mwinyi of Tanzania hosted a meeting on February 17, 1991 between Presidents Habyarimana and Museveni of Uganda. At this meeting, the Rwandan government offered a ceasefire in exchange for a

promise by Museveni to persuade the RPF to reciprocate. The reciprocity would be followed by an amnesty for the rebels.¹⁹² In a similar regional gesture, President Mobutu of Zaire hosted a meeting in N'Sele, Zaire, during which a ceasefire was agreed. At this meeting, the Rwandan government repeated its offer of an amnesty.¹⁹³ The issue of political pluralism also dominated these meetings. Habyarimana subsequently bowed to domestic and international pressure and passed a law allowing political parties¹⁹⁴ to be formed.¹⁹⁵ Apart from opening up the political space, these diplomatic initiatives did not have any positive impact on the civil war.

In a major diplomatic move to find a political solution to the end the civil war, peace talks were held in Arusha, Tanzania at the instance of the government of Tanzania and the OAU. The Arusha process, concluded in August 1993, has been referred to as preventive diplomacy yet its objective was a far cry from prevention. As Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones have noted, “the main objective at Arusha was not to prevent a perceived future disaster: rather, it was to end a civil war and construct a post-war peace agreement in a situation short of total victory and absolute defeat.”¹⁹⁶ To be sure, the process came almost three years after the RPF rebels had launched their war against the government in Kigali.

¹⁹¹ Michael S. Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflict: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, Washington, D. C.: USIP, 1996, pp. 46-48.

¹⁹² *Kessings Record of World Events*, London: Longman, 1991: 37993.

¹⁹³ African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, p. 29; Christopher Clapham, “Rwanda: The Perils of Peacemaking,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, 2, 1998, p. 201.

¹⁹⁴ The parties that were formed included the Social Democratic Party (PSD), Christian Democratic Party (PDC), Liberal Party (PL) and Democratic Republican Movement (MDR). Of all these parties, the MDR was said to be the radical one and the party that posed the greatest threat to the ruling MRND. See African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, pp. 30-32 for a detailed discussion of the formation of political parties in the aftermath of the RPF invasion.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones, “Preventive Diplomacy in Rwanda: Failure to Act or Failure of Actions?” in Bruce W. Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized*, p. 244.

To get the process off the ground, the government of Tanzania and the OAU took the initiative but, before then, the United States and France used their international leverage to bring pressure to bear on the factions in the conflict to negotiate a political settlement. While Washington threatened to cut off aid to the government of Uganda – a key supporter of the rebels – if it did not persuade its Rwandan clients to negotiate, France, a close ally of the Habyarimana regime, persuaded the government in Kigali to negotiate an exit from what the French were convinced was a war that was not winnable.¹⁹⁷ The marathon talks, which began on July 12 1992, finally ended on August 4, 1993 with the signing of the “Arusha Accords.” The Accords contained five protocols, which included:

1. Protocol on the rule of law. This committed the parties to upholding basic human rights and the rule of law.
2. Protocol on power sharing. This was a key provision, that brought the civilian opposition into the heart of government. All the existing institutions of government, including the Presidency, the cabinet, the national assembly, the judiciary, the civil service, and security institutions were to be reformed. The highest political institutions – the Presidency, cabinet and national assembly – were to be transitional at first, pending democratic elections. Thereafter, the Presidency was to be stripped of most of its powers, and a system with a division of executive, legislative and judicial power, and a much greater dilution of executive power, was to be introduced. In the meantime, guarantees were introduced. Seats in the national assembly and cabinet posts were divided among the parties, with the position of Prime Minister being awarded, for the transitional period, to the MDR.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

3. Protocol on the repatriation of refugees and the resettlement of displaced people.

This protocol settled the long-standing problem of the statelessness of Rwandese refugees in neighboring countries and also provided for the resettlement of those displaced by the war.

4. Protocol on the integration of the armed forces. Along with Protocol 2, this was the key protocol. It provided for the integration of the RPF and the Rwandese Armed Forces into a new, smaller, unified army. The RPF was to contribute forty per cent of the ranks and half of the senior officers to both the army and the gendarmerie. The Presidential Guard was to be merged with the RPF into a new, smaller, Republican Guard.

5. Protocol on miscellaneous issues and final provisions.¹⁹⁸

These Accords have variously been described as “une paix militaire”¹⁹⁹, and “a virtual textbook case of modern conflict management.”²⁰⁰ In a civil war where there is no clear winner and loser, for a peace accord to be durable, it must reflect a ‘no winner, no loser’ outcome. At Arusha, international negotiators gave in to all RPF demands, making the rebels appear as the victors. The incumbent government, on the other hand, was left unsatisfied. Consequently, the RPF got away with ‘veritable coup d’etat’ with “clear [Tutsi] winners and [Hutu] losers.”²⁰¹ Negotiators at Arusha were probably interested in getting to ‘yes’, whatever that ‘yes’ meant was not of any relevance to them. According

¹⁹⁸ African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, pp. 35-6.

¹⁹⁹ Andre Guichaoua, communication with Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones in Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones, “Preventive Diplomacy in Rwanda: Failure to Act or Failure of Actions?” in Bruce W. Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized*, p. 244.

²⁰⁰ Alan J. Kuperman, “The other lesson of Rwanda: mediators sometimes do more damage than good,” *SAIS Review* 16 (winter-spring 1996), 222, cited in Douglas G. Anglin, “Rwanda revisited: Search for the truth,” *International Journal*, Winter 2000-2001, p. 153.

to Herman Cohen, US assistant secretary of state for African affairs, a key negotiator at Arusha, “Conflict intervenors, mediators, and facilitators like negotiations, especially those leading to signed agreements. Sometimes, negotiations and signatures become an end in themselves. This appeared to be case in the Arusha process.”²⁰² Douglas Anglin aptly described this growing phenomenon as signicitis.²⁰³ In most of the conflict resolution efforts in Africa - Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia etc. - signicitis was very much in play leading to the crumbling of peace accords minutes after they are initialed.

Rwanda was not immune to this growing phenomenon. Shortly after concluding the Accords, the effects of signicitis began to be felt. There were mixed reactions to the Accords in Kigali. While one group was celebrating ‘peace’, the radicals were preparing to ‘undo Arusha.’ According to Allison des Forges, forty-eight hours after Arusha, Belgian military intelligence reported a high level of dissatisfaction among both soldiers and civilians and warned that there soon would be a “wave of demonstrations, clashes and even assassination attempts.”²⁰⁴

In the end, while the Accords were intended to create a power-sharing formula that would bring a lasting solution to the civil war, they actually created conditions which plunged Rwanda into further disaster. The fact that the RPF rebels appeared the winners and the beneficiaries of the Accords meant that the entire process did not achieve its key objective – end the civil war and get an acceptable political settlement. The effect of this imbalance was to harden the Hutu radicals and intensify their resentment against Tutsis.

²⁰¹ Bruce D. Jones, ‘Arusha peace process,’ in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, eds., *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwandan Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*, New Brunswick NJ: Transaction, 1999, pp 151, 153, cited in *Ibid.*, p. 154.

²⁰² Anglin, “Rwanda revisited,” p. 154.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Senat [Belge], *Rapport du Groupe Ad Hoc Rwanda a la Commission des Affaires Etrangeres*, January 7, 1997, p. 22 cited in Allison des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p. 125.

Right from Independence resentment was what created the conditions for the 1990 RPF invasion. The architects of the Arusha Accords should have paid more attention to finding ways to dampen the resentment and ensuring that there would not be any future reprisals against the Tutsis. By making a lot of concessions to the Tutsis, Hutu radicals were probably made to feel very insecure; in their mind, the only way to guarantee their security was to get rid of the enemy Tutsis. Some analysts have noted that the Arusha agreement over-stepped the boundary of what Hutu radicals would accept and therefore provoked their violent reaction in the form of a total annihilation of the Tutsis.²⁰⁵ It is evident that the government negotiating team at Arusha was divided and lacked the confidence of the radicals back at home. According to a Human Rights Watch report for instance, just before the signing of the Accords, a number of government ministers had indicated that the government was divided over the peace negotiations, yet the negotiations went ahead and an agreement was signed.²⁰⁶

Another problem with Arusha was the fact that the international community was not seriously committed to seeing that the terms of the Accords, even unworkable as they seem, were respected by backing diplomacy with some force, at least to create a deterrent effect.

The key architects of the Arusha Accords wanted to establish a Neutral International Force (NIF) to oversee the implementation of the Accords, particularly the transitional government as stipulated in the texts. Such a force, they hoped, would be able to deploy in good time, before the Hutu radicals would have enough time to consolidate their

²⁰⁵ See Rene Lemarchand, "Managing Transition Anarchies: Rwanda, Burundi and South Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 32, no. 4 (December 1994): 581-604; Christopher Clapham, "Rwanda: the perils of peacemaking," p. 193.

²⁰⁶ "Choosing War", *Human Rights Watch* at www.hrw.org/reports.

opposition to the Accords. Based on this line of thinking, there was hope that the NIF's mandate would go beyond the classic Chapter six peacekeeping.²⁰⁷ It was supposed to be a "force with teeth." In addition, the establishment of such a force would have made the African actors maintain and control ownership of the Accords.

Political bickering and "big power" influence at the UN prevented the establishment of the NIF. Citing the lack of neutrality on the part of the African actors,²⁰⁸ France, itself not neutral²⁰⁹, pushed for the establishment of a UN-controlled force to monitor the implementation of the Accords. Consequently, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda was established in August 1993.

(ii) Military Strategies

The OAU's Limited Military Strategy

Even in the face of the difficult conditions in which the OAU found itself, the organization took a bold initiative towards Rwanda. In 1992, concerned with the implications of the developing crisis in Rwanda on peace and security, especially in the Great Lakes region, the OAU made an attempt to design an African solution to the problem. The organization sponsored and deployed in July 1992 the Neutral Military Observer Group (NMOG), comprising fifty soldiers from Senegal, Congo, and Tunisia. This peacekeeping force was tasked with overseeing a cease-fire before negotiations got underway. When this mission failed to accomplish its objective, a second contingent of 130 soldiers was deployed and tasked with establishing a demilitarized zone between the

²⁰⁷ Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones, "Preventive Diplomacy in Rwanda: Failure to Act or Failure of Actions?" in Bruce W. Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized*, p. 247.

²⁰⁸ The African actors were believed to be in favor of the RPF and putting them in charge of implementing the Arusha Accords was going to create problems since they were likely to side with the RPF.

Rwandan army and the RPF.²¹⁰ The second deployment, like the first one, failed to achieve the desired objective of completely ending the hostilities between the RPF and Habyarimana's government. The obvious question to ask is why did the OAU fail to achieve any positive results despite the fact that the timing of its efforts was better than the interventions mounted later in the crisis?

For one thing, it appeared that the OAU underestimated the crisis that was brewing in Rwanda. Given the history behind the crisis, and the reality that regional leaders were confronting at the time – the RPF invasion with the support of Uganda – the OAU should have put together a bigger force with the ability of not only doing chapter six peacekeeping, but also chapter seven if need be. To deploy an observer mission of fifty soldiers was, to say the least, an effort in futility. Perhaps the perception that the OAU was a “toothless dog”, politically divided and grappling with financial problems, made the two factions believe that the organization could not carry out any threat.

The United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR)

The UN Security Council established UNAMIR on October 5, 1993, shortly after the signing of the Arusha Accords. The force was under the command of Canadian Major-General Romeo Dallaire. The mandate of UNAMIR was: (1) to mitigate the military conflict between Rwandan government forces and the RPF; (2) to maintain subsequent cease-fire agreements; (3) to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees; and (4) to support the process of political reconciliation.²¹¹ UNAMIR evolved from an earlier observer mission – United Nations Observer Mission to Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMUR)

- France was one of the key supporters of the Habyarimana regime in Rwanda.

²¹⁰ Scott Stearns, “An Uneasy Peace,” *Africa Report* 39, no. 1, January/February 1994, 32-35, p. 35.

²¹¹ UN. Doc. S/RES/872 (1993), 5 October 1993.

which was established in June 1993. This mission was a UN attempt to support negotiations between the RPF and the government of Rwanda by establishing its presence in the region. The objective of UNOMUR was to monitor the Rwanda-Uganda border and to ensure that no arms reached Rwanda through Uganda.²¹² Disagreements between the UN and Uganda over UNOMUR's status delayed the mission's deployment.²¹³ Eventually, UNAMIR was established to replace it.

The Security Council, anticipating a very easy mission as compared to its troubles in Somalia at the time, established UNAMIR with a mandate that made it clearly a Chapter 6 peacekeeping mission. After long deliberation and a "power play" with regard to cost and risk, a force of 2,548 was deployed between late 1993 and early 1994, with troops primarily from Belgium, Ghana and Bangladesh.²¹⁴

As we noted earlier, the Arusha Accord started off on a negative note. It was an Accord that did not take into account the realities on the ground. With no clear winner or loser in the RPF/Rwandan government civil war, the Accord handed over victory to the RPF rebels, infuriating the Hutu radicals in the process. If that was the case, diplomats at the UN should have paid a lot of attention to the possibility of violence re-erupting in Rwanda if a robust force was not deployed. Instead, Security Council members were more concerned about cost and risk and therefore deployed a very minimal force with a very weak mandate. UNAMIR's weakness was not only limited to its mandate; the mission was by all standards a shabby one – it was poorly armed. The force never received all the equipment it needed to mount even a Chapter 6 peacekeeping mission. In

²¹² UN. Doc. S/RES/846 (1993), 22 June 1993.

²¹³ Scott R. Feil, *Preventing Genocide: How the Early Use of Force Might Have Succeeded in Rwanda*, p. 5.

addition, its budget was subject to the usual lengthy bureaucratic procedure at the UN, even in the face of mounting danger to the millions of lives in Rwanda.²¹⁵ UNAMIR was simply an “international road show.” The force was sent into Rwanda but refused the mandate to properly intervene. By so doing, all the UN and the international community sought to achieve was to tell the whole world that “something” was being done in Rwanda

The presence of such a weak force in Rwanda emboldened the Hutu radicals into believing that the UN/international community was not prepared to take the risks necessary to prevent them from carrying out an all-out assault against Tutsis and moderate Hutus. In January 1994, four clear months before the genocide, an insider from the “presidential Guard” informed UNAMIR Commander Dallaire that the Hutu government was planning to liquidate all Tutsis. The informant also hinted that the Hutu government was planning to force the UN to withdraw by killing Belgian peacekeepers – the cream of the UNAMIR contingent.²¹⁶ Such a withdrawal, Hutu radicals reasoned, would give them unfettered access to their victims. Dallaire sent a fax to UN headquarters in New York informing his superiors of the risk of genocide and asking for reinforcements and the expansion of his mandate to allow him to undertake a Chapter 7 peace-enforcement. No attention was paid to Dallaire’s fax message. This was the worst mistake the UN would ever make. What followed this UN action was about 800,000 lives lost whilst the international community stood by and watched.

²¹⁴ See *ibid.* Also, Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones, “Preventive Diplomacy in Rwanda: Failure to Act or Failure of Actions?” in Bruce W. Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized*, p. 249.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform you that Tomorrow we will be killed with our families*, New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1998, pp. 103-109.

Dallaire later lamented (after the fact, though) that his proposal for an intervention force in the face of imminent genocide required a mandate adopted under Chapter 7 that would comprise five critical elements directed to: “(1) stop the genocide; (2) conduct a peace enforcement mission; (3) assist in the return of refugees and displaced persons; (4) ensure the successful delivery of humanitarian aid; and (5) assist in a cessation of hostilities.”²¹⁷

On April 6, 1994, the crisis in Rwanda hit its peak when the plane carrying both the Rwandan and Burundian presidents was hit by a rocket, killing all on board and marking the descent of Rwanda into anarchy. Repeated calls by UNAMIR Commander Dallaire for the UN to expand the force’s mandate and for additional resources went unheeded, even in the face of the unfolding genocide. UNAMIR was in fact weakened when Hutu extremists massacred a number of Belgian paratroopers - the cream of UNAMIR – prompting Belgium to withdraw its forces. The action of the international community at this critical juncture in the history of Rwanda was to spell doom for this already devastated country. When Hutu extremists broke loose and started going on a rampage, instead of the United Nations sending in massive reinforcements and giving UNAMIR the right mandate - Chapter 7 instead of Chapter 6 peacekeeping - the direct opposite was done.

In April 1994, the Security Council passed a number of resolutions aimed not at saving the people of Rwanda, but rather demonstrating the indifference of the international community. Resolution 912 reduced the size of UNAMIR forces from

²¹⁷ Scott R. Feil, *Preventing Genocide*, p. 7.

2,500 to 270.²¹⁸ In addition, the skeleton force left in Rwanda was prohibited from using force to stabilize the situation.²¹⁹ Such a decision was a recipe for disaster at a time when the Hutu extremists, armed to the teeth, saw UNAMIR as a potential stumbling block in their effort to bring to a logical conclusion what has been in the works since Independence.

At the Security Council, both China and the United States initially refused to recognize what was happening in Rwanda as genocide. Their rationale was to avoid being compelled by the UN Charter to act. In his recently published first-hand account, Dallaire strongly argues that UNAMIR failed because of “the fundamental indifference of the world community to the plight of seven to eight million black Africans in a tiny country that had no strategic or resource value to any world power.”²²⁰ In the case of the United States in particular, the ‘Mogadishu Syndrome’, still fresh in the memories of the American public, made it difficult for the Clinton administration to justify any troop deployment in Rwanda. The American response to the tragedy can be understood within the context of the change in American policy towards UN military interventions. In May 1994, President Clinton issued Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25).²²¹ A policy reaction to the American experience in Somalia, PDD-25 addressed six major issues of

²¹⁸ “Resolution 912, Adopted by the Security Council at Its 3368th Meeting on 21 April 1994,” S/RES/912, cited in Alice Ackerman, *Making Peace Prevail: Preventing Violent Conflict in Macedonia*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000, p. 40.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, Toronto: Random House, 2003, p. 6.

²²¹ The rationale behind this policy shift is premised on the notion that the US cannot be the world’s policeman nor can it at the same time ignore the increase in armed conflicts around the world. The policy is therefore designed to impose discipline on both the UN and the US to make peace operations a more effective instrument of collective security. See “*Clinton Administration Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations (PDD 25)*,” Released by the Bureau of International Organizational Affairs, U.S. Department of State, February 22, 1996.

reform and improvement,²²² which would determine America's involvement in international peacekeeping. The American reaction to Rwanda was informed by PDD-25 – they would not send their troops unless the expanded UNAMIR strictly complied with the issues of reform and improvement set out in PDD-25. Rwanda was the first victim of this new American policy shift – a policy, some would argue, was America's way of running away from its responsibility as the sole global Superpower. According to Alain Destexhe,

The PDD trapped the UN in a vicious circle: the United States would refuse any new deployment of the UN Blue Helmets unless all the necessary conditions (logistical, financial, troop deployment, etc.) were fulfilled – yet they could never be fulfilled *without* the active support of the superpower. This Catch 22 situation was further complicated by the added condition that if America was to be involved in any such operations they must have a direct bearing on US national interest.²²³

The net effect was that the 'crucial' American leadership, important in any UN intervention, was lacking. Indeed, the US not only refused to participate in any intervention in Rwanda, it also blocked any resolution for action by the UN and "refused to agree on resolution 719 of 17 May 1994, authorising the deployment of a maximum of 5500 men, until it had ensured that there was no risk of any real American commitment."²²⁴ Clearly, there was no way Rwanda could meet all the tough conditions set out in PDD-25. Even clear-cut Chapter 6 UN missions are not without risks. With genocide looming on the horizon, it was certain that the UN was not going to be able to

²²² These issues include: Making disciplined and coherent choices about which peace operations to support; reducing US costs for UN operations; defining clearly US policy regarding the command and control of American military forces in UN peace operations; reforming and improving the UN's capability to manage peace operations; improving the way the US government manages and funds peace operations; and creating better forms of cooperation between the Executive, the Congress and the American public on peace operations. See *ibid.*

²²³ Alain Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, p. 50.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

mount the much-needed Chapter 7 peace enforcement. The outcome of the crisis in Rwanda was, to put it mildly, a disaster.

In fact, at a time when the international community should have come in en masse, that was precisely when the Security Council authorized the scaling-down of the UN presence in Rwanda – an action largely blamed as sending a signal to the genocidaires to go ahead and carry out their final act. Jones was right when he observed that “there was no armed humanitarian intervention in Rwanda specifically intended to deal with the perpetration of the genocide. There were ... putatively humanitarian interventions prior to the genocide (to help resolve the civil war) and after it (to punish its perpetrators).”²²⁵ In fact, the actions of the international community towards Rwanda at the critical juncture in the country’s history were akin to that of an elite in a failing state - avoiding the hard and difficult decisions. Whilst it is impossible to dismiss the fact that any intervention before the genocide would have been mounted at a very high risk, the risk of not acting was even greater. Indeed, what was needed in Rwanda in the months and weeks leading to the genocide, when there was abundant evidence that genocide was imminent, was the kind of credible commitment displayed by France and the regional coalition in the case of the Central African Republic (discussed below). Some form of coercion was needed to contain the situation while long-term measures were being put in place. As Scott Feil aptly noted, “The violence began as the result of choice, and such choices can be influenced... Forces appropriately trained, equipped, and commanded, and introduced in a timely manner, could have stemmed the violence in and around the capital, prevented its

²²⁵ B. D. Jones, “‘Intervention without Borders’: humanitarian intervention in Rwanda 1990-94’, *Millennium* 24, 2:225-49, cited in Helen M. Hintjens, “Explaining the 1994 genocide in Rwanda,” p. 273.

spread to the countryside, and created conditions conducive to the cessation of the civil war.”²²⁶

Jentleson sees three components to such an argument. First, because of its weakness, UNAMIR failed to effectively deter the Hutu extremists; second, there was a failure to act on the warning picked up by UNAMIR in January 1994 from a Hutu informant; and third, UN officials, the United States and other Security Council members rebuffed General Dallaire’s requests for reinforcements and simply decided not to respond.²²⁷

Apart from the fact that actors failed to deal decisively with early warning information, there was everything wrong with the timing of most of the intervention efforts in Rwanda. I noted in the first chapter that timing is very crucial in conflict prevention – third parties not only have to intervene, but they have to intervene at the most opportune time, the “ripe” moment. The key question is: were there any ripe moments in the Rwandan conflict? In the preceding discussions, it was noted several times that the Rwandan conflict, like most conflicts, evolved over a period spanning several decades – from pre-Independence to the early 1990s. There were several key moments, which can be described as “ripe” moments during which the right form of intervention could have changed the course of events. Two of these moments are worth noting.

First, aware of the peculiar nature of the Rwandan situation and the deteriorating human rights conditions, the 1990 RPF invasion (with the support of the government of Uganda) should have been taken seriously by the OAU and the international community.

²²⁶ Scott R. Feil, *Preventing Genocide: How the Early Use of Force Might Have Succeeded in Rwanda* (Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Commission for Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1998), cited in Bruce W. Jentleson, “Coercive Prevention: Normative, Political, and Policy Dilemmas,” *Peaceworks* No. 35, 2000, p. 16.

Douglas Anglin, citing a credible source, noted that the invasion was “the single most important factor in escalating the political polarization of Rwanda.”²²⁸ True, the invasion changed the course of Rwandan history forever. It opened the floodgates for the events that eventually led to the 1994 genocide. Given that the invasion was launched from Uganda, the international community could have used its leverage in Uganda and put a lot of pressure on Museveni not only to call for the withdrawal of the invading troops (most of them were Ugandan troops), but to stop launching further attacks. France was the only country to condemn Museveni’s act. To other Western countries, “Museveni, the darling of the donors, was immune.”²²⁹

As if this was not enough, actors missed a second opportune moment – making the Arusha Accords workable. As noted earlier, during the process of negotiating the Accords, the RPF was said to have gotten all it wanted as opposed to the representatives of the Habyarimana regime, who went home with their objectives not completely accomplished. This was a blow to the Hutu hardliners, who were already looking for an opportunity to rally their fellow Hutus around them and exterminate the Tutsis. The hardliners got a “blank cheque” to kill when the international community continued to drag its feet over implementing the key protocols agreed upon at Arusha. To quote General Dallaire again, Rwanda, “was seen as too difficult and not of sufficient interest and value to prevent the outbreak of violence, and once violence had broken out, it still was not of sufficient interest to warrant the expense of resources and risk of more casualties to stop the violence from spreading.”²³⁰

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

²²⁸ Anglin, *Rwanda Revisited*, p. 153.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

²³⁰ Dallaire, “Foreword” in Scott R. Feil, *Preventing Genocide*, p. 1.

In the end, once the warning signals were not responded to appropriately, and once key opportunities were missed, actors got their strategies wrong or misapplied at best. Thus everything happened in Rwanda except the prevention of conflict. The Government of Rwanda, Rwanda's Great Lakes neighbors, particularly Uganda, the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations and the international community in general all failed to firmly deal with Rwanda's problem right from Independence, especially in the years leading up to the 1990 RPF invasion.

(iii) Economic Diplomacy

In the first chapter I argued that economic tools of foreign policy could be effective weapons in the prevention of conflict. "Carrots" or positive economic tools as against sanctions can be very effective in the prevention of conflicts, especially in situations under which violence is fuelled by deep-seated economic and social inequalities. In situations in which there are high levels of human rights abuses, however, "carrots" become counter-productive since they are likely to encourage and cultivate tyrants. Under such circumstances, the effective economic tools are "sticks" or negative economic diplomacy. How did the international community, especially donor countries and big powers with the capacity to employ both carrots and sticks, fare in Rwanda? Could the use of carrots and/or sticks have produced a different outcome in Rwanda? This section will address these questions.

As I noted earlier in this chapter, the Rwandan genocide, like many conflicts, evolved over a lengthy period spanning about forty years. The warning signals in Rwanda did not need any analysis – they were clear and evident enough for actors interested in conflict prevention to understand that, if nothing was done, the situation could get out of control.

What international and local actors were not sure of, perhaps, was the level the violence would assume.

Beginning from Independence, successive Hutu governments in Kigali were known to sanction violence against the Tutsi minority and all opponents of the government. The abuses became worse during the latter part of the Habyarimana regime when prominent figures within the regime were said to be part of a plot to liquidate Tutsis, especially in the aftermath of the 1990 Tutsi invasion. To be sure, by late 1992 and early 1993, Human rights NGOs and the UN had compiled information clearly pointing to government involvement in systematic killings of Tutsis as well as the existence of radical Hutu elements around President Habyarimana who prepared death lists and were ready at the opportune moment to get rid of all those on their lists.²³¹

In the face of evidence of government involvement in human rights abuses, the international community tried to act. But like its military approach, a show was put up to signal that something was being done. According to Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones, theoretically, most donor countries acknowledged the evidence of a deteriorating situation and decided there was the need to act, but in practice, “almost all donors decided not reduce aid despite human rights violations, even though these were recognized as severe.”²³² This was a time when there was a window of opportunity for international donors to withhold aid and get the regime in Kigali to clean up its act. Doing nothing and assuming it was business as usual probably emboldened the regime to believe that the international community endorsed what was happening in Rwanda as normal.

²³¹ Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones, “Preventive Diplomacy in Rwanda: Failure to Act or Failure of Actions?” in Bruce W. Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized*, pp. 250-52.

The World Bank and the IMF which had been involved in economic reforms in Rwanda beginning from June 1990, shortly before the RPF invasion, only got tough with the regime in 1994 and, even then, not based on poor human rights records, but based on the pursuit of sound economic policies on the part of the regime in Kigali. According to M. Chossudovsky, it was irresponsible on the part of the IMF and the World Bank to impose strict economic conditionalities on Rwanda because of the likelihood such economic shock therapies would have severe political and social repercussions in a country on the brink of civil war.²³³ The effect of these measures was to worsen the plight of the average Rwandan on the street, thereby feeding into the growing domestic opposition, especially among the Hutu radicals. Consequently, instead of introducing reforms, radicals continued to blame the enemy Tutsis for the country's economic problems – at least they had a scapegoat. As Helen M. Hintjens has rightly noted,

Instead of heeding the critical choices and sharing power with opposition parties, so that funds would be released by the World Bank, extremist politicians and military, as well as some powerful business and media interests, set their faces towards genocide as the only 'final solution' to their problems.²³⁴

The timing of the IMF/World Bank economic intervention points to the dilemma in the use of economic tools of diplomacy. Here, like in any other tool of conflict prevention, timing is very important. Strict conditionalities and sanctions were needed many years before 1994, especially when human rights abuses started to be documented by NGOs and the UN. As noted in chapter one, positive economic tools are effective at the pre-crisis stage of conflict, but not when conflicts escalate.

²³² Ibid., p. 250.

²³³ M. Chossudovsky, "Economic genocide in Rwanda," in M. Chossudovsky, *The Globalization of Poverty: impacts of the IMF and World Bank reforms*, London: Zed/Third World Network, 1997, pp. 111-22.

²³⁴ Helen M. Hintjens, "Explaining the 1994 genocide in Rwanda," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 2 (1999), p. 258.

Suhrke and Jones posed a very important question: “Why was human rights conditionality – an arrow in the quiver available to the international community – not pursued more decisively?” They argue that the main reason seemed to be the fact that the international community was obsessed with the quest for “good governance” as a solution to the growing problem of civil violence, which meant there was the need for continuous diplomatic and economic engagement with Rwanda. In this context, it was believed that withdrawing aid would have a negative effect.²³⁵ True, withdrawing aid would have a negative effect, but when dealing with a government that had a track record of human rights abuses over many years how could the international community be sure at the time that continuous engagement would reduce human rights abuses? If aid was withdrawn, in order for the desired effect to be achieved, it would have to be backed by the willingness to use force if necessary to protect the victims of human rights abuses. This, as demonstrated later during the military intervention in Rwanda, was something that the international community was not prepared to do.

The key difficulty is how do we measure the outcome of conflict and ascertain whether or not there was prevention? In chapter 1, I noted in the conflict prevention framework that, in order for conflict to be prevented, there is the need to take decisive multiple strategies at the pre-crisis stage of the conflict cycle. What is evident from the intervention in Rwanda is the fact that no decisive efforts were taken at the pre-crisis stage²³⁶ of the conflict. I noted in the framework that the pre-crisis stage of conflict is a continuum spanning from point A to B and it is easier to prevent conflict at point A than point B. Point A in the Rwandan crisis could be taken to be from pre-Independence to

²³⁵ Astri Suhrke and Bruce Jones in *Opportunities Missed*, p. 251.

the latter days of the Habyarimana's regime. Point B is from those latter days of the Habyarimana regime when human rights violations were rife to October 1990 when RPF forces invaded Rwanda from Uganda. As is evident from all the preceding discussions, from the 1950s until the 1990s, a lot of opportunities existed for actors to deal decisively with the crisis but these opportunities were not seized. To be sure, Rwanda has had a fair share of interest on the part of both African and non-African actors, as argued by Christopher Clapham. What it hasn't had is a committed and sustained interest in the crisis. Actors engaged in Rwanda mounted, at best, half-hearted and poorly timed interventions, which produced a series of failed outcomes eventually leading to the genocide in 1994.

III: Evaluation of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. There is a relationship between early warning and conflict prevention such that the earlier the warning, the better the outcome. More specifically, it is postulated that if early warning is to have a positive impact on the outcome of preventive efforts:

- H1a. there has to be effective indicators, methods, and information systems for identifying latent conflicts
- H1b. the information gathering system has to be well coordinated
- H1c. the strengths of the various information gatherers should be harnessed so that information could be gathered in the quickest way possible
- H1d. the information gathered has to be properly analyzed and packaged for policy makers

The case of Rwanda supports the notion that early warning is not an end itself. It has to be followed by early action if the warning is to have any significance. As is evident from the preceding discussion, warning signals in Rwanda spanned several decades. In

²³⁶ The pre-crisis stage of the Rwandan conflict is defined as the period spanning independence to the 1990 RPF invasion.

spite of this, real efforts to address the Rwandan crisis only got underway in the 1990s, in the aftermath of the RPF invasion.

This hypothesis links the efficacy of warning signals to useful indicators, methods, and systems of detecting conflicts early enough. The analysis in this case provides support for this hypothesis. Many years before the genocide took place, there were warning signals which clearly predicted an impending bloodbath. The ominous warning came from UNAMIR commander, General Dallaire, who picked up credible information from an informant in January 1994. He relayed this information to UN headquarters, but it was simply ignored. According to Boutros Boutros-Ghali, UN Secretary-General at the time, some members of the Security Council refused to recognize warning signals coming from Kigali as a sign of an impending genocide, since invoking the word “genocide” would compel the international community to act.²³⁷ As noted earlier, UN officials, the United States and other Security Council members rebuffed General Dallaire’s requests for reinforcements and simply decided not to respond.

While a clear relationship exists between early warning and prevention, if the actors with the capability to act on warning signals fail to do so, then early warning in itself becomes insignificant. The analysis in this case does not support this hypothesis – there is a correlation between warning and prevention but not without action.

Hypothesis 2. There is a relationship between timing and conflict prevention such that if conflict has to be prevented, third parties have to intervene at the pre-violence stage of conflict

²³⁷ Interview granted to Brian Stewart on Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in a documentary “Rwanda: The Autopsy of a Genocide”, April 1994.

The task of third parties in any intervention - diplomatic, economic or military - is easier and cheaper if the intervention is mounted before the conflict escalates. Based on the analysis in this case, Rwanda had been a “boiling cauldron” since its colonial masters left in the early 1960s. As is evident from the analysis, no real effort was made to intervene at the time when it was possible to influence the developing crisis.

At the time the international community began to take an interest in Rwanda with the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force, the conflict had moved beyond the pre-crisis stage to escalation. Still it was possible to have engaged decisively and avert genocide. But as is evident from the discussion, the international community engaged in a half-hearted manner. This emboldened the perpetrators of the genocide to carry out what they had been planning for years.

Since no intervention was carried out at the pre-crisis stage, it is difficult to evaluate this hypothesis. However, it is fair to speculate that if a serious effort had been made, particularly after the RPF invasion in 1990, the eventual bloodbath could have been averted. The analysis therefore provides support for this hypothesis – the timing of the intervention was bad; as a result there was genocide.

Hypothesis 3. There is a relationship between timing and strategy that affects outcome, such that:

- H3a. intervention at pre-violence stage with economic and political strategy is likely to result in successful conflict prevention
- H3b. intervention at the pre-violence stage with a military strategy is likely to result in limited or short-term success but failure in the long run
- H3c. intervention beyond the pre-violence stage with political, economic and military strategies is likely to produce a failed outcome

As is evident from the discussion, there was no intervention at the pre-violence stage of the conflict. There were efforts made at a time when the crisis was escalating. In the section on the various strategies employed in Rwanda, it was noted that there were diplomatic, economic and military strategies but all of them came at the wrong time.

In 1990, at the time of the RPF invasion, there was a ripe moment for diplomacy. Serious engagement by regional leaders and the international community at the time could have saved Rwanda. Beyond that, the situation in Rwanda was not amenable to any diplomatic effort – be it political or economic. For instance, in early 1994, at the time General Dallaire was picking up signals and relaying them to the UN in New York, it was too late for diplomacy. That was the time for a forceful military engagement. That wouldn't have solved the underlying problems that gave rise to the crisis, but that could have saved some lives. Unfortunately, however, UNAMIR was inserted into Rwanda but was refused both the appropriate mandate under Chapter 7 as well as enough personnel to do the job. When Dallaire called for a reinforcement just before the genocide, his desperate plea was disregarded by the Security Council.

Rwanda was a failure in diplomacy and the analysis supports hypothesis 3c. There were efforts on all three fronts - economic, diplomatic and military but - most of it was too little and too late.

Hypothesis 4. There is a relationship between timing and strategy that affects outcome, such that:

H4a. mixed strategies are likely to produce a better outcome

H4b. single strategies are likely to produce a poor outcome

It was noted in chapter one that, in general, third parties can use three strategies in dealing with a crisis - political, economic and military – and, most of the time, these are applied in tandem and not in isolation.

In Rwanda, as noted in hypothesis 3, a mix of strategies was applied but third parties got the timing all wrong. As a result, the strategies were ineffective and failed to have the intended impact on the developing crisis.

The analysis tends to support this hypothesis. It is not just the strategies per se, it is more about when the strategies are applied to the situation.

Hypothesis 5. The chances for preventing conflict are better if there is a close collaboration between the UN/International community and regional, sub-regional and local organizations.

Most regional and sub-regional organizations have a high stake in the conflicts developing around them and are generally willing to intervene. They usually lack the wherewithal to do so. Any collaboration between these organizations and the UN/international community is one that puts them in a subordinate capacity, leaving them in a position where they expect the UN/international community to at least provide them the means to carry out any intended intervention.

Clearly, in the case of Rwanda there was some regional involvement – the OAU as well as neighbors such as Tanzania. But these local actors were not capable of seriously influencing the situation on the ground. The outcome was a disaster.

Thus, for any such collaboration to be effective, the party with the means has to be forthcoming and committed. Any half-hearted approach is likely to produce a flawed partnership with little or no impact. This was the case in Rwanda. The UN and the

international community 'refused' to properly engage and the Africans did not have the means to do the job.

The analysis does not support the hypothesis. Collaboration in itself is not enough. It has to be backed by the will to act, especially on the part of the 'superior' partner.

IV: Conclusions and Key Findings

It is evident from the preceding discussions that Rwanda was a clear case of failure in conflict prevention. The usual assumption is that, once there are clear signals of an impending catastrophe, efforts will be made, at best, to prevent the looming catastrophe and, at worst, at least to limit its impact. In the case of Rwanda, neither was genocide prevented nor its impact limited.

To be sure, as discussed already, efforts were made to prevent and/or limit the impact of the genocide but these efforts, for reasons evident in the discussion, were all in vain. True, there were interventions but Rwanda was a test case of the limits of intervention and offers some lessons for conflict prevention. The key findings of the chapter include:

- For conflict prevention to be effective, there is the need for intervenors to pay serious attention to warning signals;
- It is not enough just to intervene – both the timing and strategies of intervention have to be right in order to have a positive impact on the conflict. Half-hearted interventions only lead to further exacerbation of a conflict;
- Sometimes diplomacy has to be backed by the credible use of force; international organizations should not shy away from applying force when the situation demands that. In the days leading to the genocide, UNAMIR was severely

handicapped by the decision of the UN not to boost its capacity and mandate, especially to enable it to use force to stop the Hutu extremists.

One important lesson from Rwanda is the fact the international community cannot afford to let countries that have ethnic affinities with most of their neighbours slip into civil war, let alone genocide. This is simply because of the profoundly destabilizing regional repercussions. The continuing instability in the Great Lakes is largely a fallout from the Rwandan tragedy. But as a country, the political leadership in Rwanda has been able to reunite Hutu and Tutsi and put the past behind. In 2000, Kagame, a Tutsi, was elected Rwanda's new President. In addition, apart from the UN's criminal tribunal for Rwanda, there has emerged a traditional system of administering justice – the 'gacaca' courts. These are courts in which ordinary Rwandans judge their peers. The aim of this traditional system is to help clear the huge backlog of genocide cases, which, if left to the country's courts, will take decades to clear.

The next chapter examines the case of Liberia which, in many respects, is a failure in conflict prevention like Rwanda.

Chapter Three

CASE 2: LIBERIA

Introduction

Liberia has occupied a unique position in Africa. Unlike most African states, it has never been colonized. The country is an amalgam of native Liberians and freed slaves who were resettled in the mid-1800s from the southern United States in what later became known as Liberia. When these freed slaves, who later became known as “Americo-Liberians” arrived, they met groups of native people who had organized forms of government and customs. The latter’s political and social structures were governed by customs and laws, which suited their purpose. The settlers, who eventually dominated the political scene, adopted a civil government that was different from that which was practiced by the natives. And for the next century and half, both economic and political power was concentrated in the hands of the small Americo-Liberian minority (that made up only 5% of the population).

In the 1960s, 70s and 80s, at a time when most of Africa was experiencing instability thanks to persistent military take-overs which turned into dictatorships, Liberia was a bastion of peace in Africa. This was probably so for because the Americo-Liberians ensured that indigenous Liberians were completely excluded from politics. They achieved this by creating an artificial inequality – economic and political. Constituting only a tiny minority of the population, the Americo-Liberians dominated all spheres of public and private life, relegating the natives to the status of second-class citizens.²³⁸

²³⁸ According to Christopher Clapham, citing figures from the 1962 population census, the settler population in Liberia was less than 1%. See Christopher Clapham, “Liberia”, in John Dunn, ed., *West African States: Failure and Promise*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 125-6.

The downside of this artificial stability is the fact that it eventually generated a lot of instability in Liberia. It is interesting to note that the inequality that emerged during settler rule was at the root of the conflict in Liberia. This was coupled with the poor political and economic performance that characterized both the settler administrations and the only indigenous administration – the Doe regime.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the conflict in Liberia which began in 1989 using the framework developed in chapter one. The central argument of the chapter is that, even though there were diplomatic and military efforts at the regional level by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to prevent Liberia's descent into chaos, the timing of the various forms of interventions was inappropriate as were some of the strategies. As a result, ECOWAS managed to control but not prevent the conflict. Liberia was therefore a failure of conflict prevention.

Like all four case study chapters, this chapter is divided into three major sections. The first part is analytical. I begin by conceptually examining the causes of the crisis as warning signals. These signals are classified into three categories: structural factors, medium term signals and triggers. Having examined the warning signals, I analyze the strategies that were employed to deal with them. The second part of the chapter evaluates the hypotheses developed in the first chapter. The last part of the chapter concludes with key findings.

I: Analysis

This section will analyze the second case – that of Liberia - from the perspective of the theoretical framework developed in the first chapter. Like the previous case of Rwanda, I will attempt to examine the extent to which theory has application to reality. Integrating theory with practice will help shed light on the relationship between the independent variables – early warning, timing, and strategies – and the dependent variable – prevention.

The analysis begins with warning signals. As in the case of Rwanda, warning signals are divided in terms of long-term structural factors, short-term policies and finally the triggers. The purpose of adopting such an approach, instead of focusing on immediate warning signals, is to be able to trace the conflict back in time. This enables me to build a strong argument, that what was lacking in the case of Liberia, like in the case of Rwanda, was not adequate warning but the development of appropriate and timely strategies to cope with the conflict.

(a) Warning Signals

This section examines the signals of the Liberian crisis. As I indicated already, the warning signals are divided into long-term structural factors, short-term policies and finally the triggers. This is summarized in the table below.

Table 3.1: Timelines of the Liberian Crisis

Description	Time-line	Stage of Conflict
Exclusionary Policies of Americo-Liberian regimes	1800-1980	Pre-crisis
Samuel Doe's Revenge Policies	April 1980-1989	Pre-crisis
Taylor's Invasion	December 1989	Escalation

(i) Structural Factors: The Americo-Liberians and Exclusionary Policies

Analysts differ in terms of what they consider to be the warning signs of an impending bloodbath and disaster in Liberia. Some see the conflict in Liberia as having its roots dating back to the 1800s, whereas others see it as beginning from the early 1980s. A third view traces the conflict to a decade later. Analysts such as George Klay Kieh Jr., who espouses the first view, argue that the seeds of the Liberian civil were planted in the 1800s during the formation of the state, when the non-democratic framework and its attendant components of political repression and socio-economic inequalities and underdevelopment were instituted.²³⁹

As a result of this domination, the social fabric of Liberian society that emerged was one that was comparable to the superior-inferior myth which characterized the relationship between the Americo-Liberians and the southern Americans at the time of their deportation.²⁴⁰ Social, economic, and political barriers of absurd variations were

²³⁹ George Klay Kieh, Jr., "The Obstacles to the Peaceful Resolution of the Liberian Civil Conflict," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 17, 1994, pp. 97-108.

²⁴⁰ One of the reasons normally advanced for the deportation of freed slaves from the United States to Liberia was that the freed slaves were inferior to western civilization and consequently incapable of adjusting themselves to that civilization. It was argued that they would be better off in their original habitat (Africa). For this line of argument, see for example, Lawrence C. Howard, *American Involvement in Africa South of the Sahara 1800-1860*, New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1988, p. 274.

constructed to curtail the indigenous people from maximizing their productivity.

According to Emmanuel Dolo:

Multiple variations of discrimination, the most vicious of them, formed part of the civil administration and the social fabric of the Liberian society. Coupled with seizure of their land, indigenous people were taxed without representation. In later years, when indigenous people were allowed to participate in the national government – there were still implicit restrictions on the numbers and types of cabinet positions that they could occupy: Education, Local Government/Internal Affairs, Information and Defense. On the contrary, settlers controlled key positions such as Foreign Affairs, Planning and Economic Affairs, Commerce, Health and Social Welfare, Agriculture, etc. When the pretense was made to strike a balance between the rural and urban sectors, this slave psychology also persisted as a major determinant of how power was dispensed.²⁴¹

Interestingly, freed slaves who had tasted the value of ‘freedom’ came to inflict slavery on people who were the rightful owners of the land. Herbert Howe contends that the Americo-Liberians soon displayed some of the worst traits of the antebellum U. S. south and, consequently, victims of American slavery became the victimizers of ‘the natives.’²⁴²

Over the course of the century and half that the Americo-Liberian ruled Liberia, extreme forms of inequality were entrenched within the society, to the extent that many analysts believe that this was partly the reason for Liberia’s descent into anarchy. Rhoda Howard succinctly argues that:

Some of the current problems in Liberia can be traced to its origins as a colonial system in which the population was divided into status groups.... A settler elite formed which was contemptuous of indigenous Liberians. This settler elite ruled Liberia until 1980, when President William Tolbert was overthrown and executed by Sergeant Samuel Doe, who in turn was overthrown and tortured to death in 1990. Liberia has since degenerated into civil war, with multiplying factions almost indistinguishable even by ethnic criteria.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Emmanuel Dolo, *Democracy Versus Dictatorship: The Quest for Freedom and Justice in Africa’s Oldest Republic*, Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1996, p. 22.

²⁴² Herbert Howe, “Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping,” *International Security*, vol. 21, 3, Winter 96/97, pp. 145-176.

²⁴³ Rhoda E. Howard, “Civil conflict in sub-saharan Africa: internally generated causes”, *International Journal*, vol. L1, 1, Winter 95/96:27-53.

One cannot disagree with Howard's argument. The inequalities that native Liberians had to contend with for almost two centuries eventually produced a backlash from within the indigenous population, when indigenous military personnel organized a rebellion that toppled the Americo-Liberian hegemony.

(ii) Medium Term Warning Signals: Samuel Doe and Revenge Policies

Analysts such as Herman J. Cohen, who traces early warning back to the early-1980s, argue that Master Sergeant Samuel Doe's violent take-over of the Tolbert administration in Monrovia in April 1980 was what ushered in the current Liberian crisis. Cohen argues that, in a larger sense, the crisis in Liberia began April 12, 1980 with the invasion of the Presidential Palace and assassination of President William R. Tolbert, Jr., by seventeen "inebriated non-commissioned officers of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL)."²⁴⁴ The soldiers immediately put in place a "People's Redemption Council" (PRC) with Samuel Doe at the helm.

Since military take-overs were common-place in Africa in the 1980s, critics will argue that what took place in Liberia was nothing new to warrant any special attention. In fact, some would argue that it was difficult to distinguish between Doe's dictatorship and other kinds of dictatorships in Africa, since most countries were under military rule. Nonetheless, there is something that made the Liberian case different and worthy of attention. This was the fact that, unlike in many African countries, the Liberian coup d'etat was a major political earthquake and an event of far-reaching political consequence

²⁴⁴ Herman J. Cohen, *Intervening in Africa: Superpower Peacemaking in a Troubled Continent*, London: Macmillan, 2000, p. 126.

because a majority group took over the reins of government from a minority group that had dominated the political landscape for more than a century.²⁴⁵

The takeover by the majority is not very significant in itself. What was important and worthy of attention was the events that followed the takeover – the series of human rights violations that constituted very credible warning signals of an unraveling political situation. The Doe administration was characterized by excessive brutalities meted out not only to the Americo-Liberians but also to his own people. During the violent takeover, Doe and his men assassinated President Tolbert and most of his family and those close to him. And, by his first anniversary in power, Doe had eliminated most of his serious rivals. In fact, Doe was repressive to the extent that his decade (1980-1989) of heavy-handedness has been blamed mainly as the immediate cause of the Liberian crisis.²⁴⁶ During that period, the situation in Liberia for all ethnic groups, except Doe's Krahn tribesmen, can best be described as one that was linked with acute social uncertainty and, indeed, fear of what the future might bring. According to Marc Weller, Doe ruled Liberia under martial law from 1980 until 1986, when a new, democratic constitution was to come into force. Doe left the constitution unimplemented and, instead, viciously suppressed political opposition and relied on the loyalty of members of his own tribe, the Krahn, to maintain his rule.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ See for example, Rhoda E. Howard, "Civil conflict in sub-saharan Africa: internally generated causes," *International Journal* Vol. L1, No. 1, Winter 1995/96:27-53; Herbert Howe, "Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Winter 1996/97), pp. 145-176; George Klay Kieh, Jr., "The Obstacles to the Peaceful Resolution of the Liberian Civil Conflict," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Volume 17, 1994, pp. 97-108; Lindsay Barret, "Liberia and West Africa: Which Way Out?," *West Africa*, 6-12 May, 1996, pp 697-700.

²⁴⁷ Marc Weller, ed., *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement: The Liberian Crisis*, Cambridge International Document Series, Vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. xix.

Oppression and gross human rights abuses became the order of the day. Doe resorted to very crude tactics in order to consolidate his grip on power. According to Leonard Brehun, after several attempts had been made on his life, and in order to convince the public that he was powerful and therefore difficult to overthrow, Doe on several occasions feigned coup attempts which he blamed on imaginary opponents, most of whom had to face severe penalties including execution.²⁴⁸ Raymond Copson was probably right when he noted that “The tendency of many African governments to rule through arbitrary and repressive means has provoked violent and armed resistance in many instances.”²⁴⁹

Even though his regime was becoming very unpopular at home, Doe had a lot of foreign support. He strategically played on Cold War politics and opted for the traditional Liberian pro-American posture. He befriended one of America’s key allies - Israel - by establishing diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv, even at a time when most African countries had cut links with Israel. He also distanced himself from America’s arch enemy in Africa - Libya - by severing diplomatic ties with that country.²⁵⁰ This strategic move was important and Doe reaped some benefits²⁵¹, but these benefits were

²⁴⁸ Brehun, *Liberia*, p. 23

²⁴⁹ Raymond Copson, ‘Peace in Africa?’ in Francis Deng and I. William Zartman (eds.), *Conflict Resolution in Africa* (Washington DC: The Brookings Inst., 1991) p. 20, cited in George Klay Kieh, Jr. “The Political and Economic Roots of Civil Conflicts in Africa: Implications for US Foreign Policy,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* (special issue), Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 41-54.

²⁵⁰ See for example, *ibid.*

²⁵¹ Liberia was a major African recipient of US aid, with the Doe regime receiving about \$500 million in US aid between 1980 and 1985. Also the US had strategic interests in Liberia included the Omega navigation station and the Voice of America's largest transmitting station in Africa. See for example, Holly Burkhalter and Rakiya Omaar, 'Failures of State,' *Africa Report*, Nov.-Dec. 1990, p. 28, in Funmi Olonisakin, "UN Co-operation with Regional Organizations in Peacekeeping: The Experience of ECOMOG and UNOMIL in Liberia," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Autumn 1996, pp. 33-51.

short-lived. As I will discuss below, the international community, particularly the United States, could not save Doe at the time when he needed them most.

In fact, Doe's rule was essentially no different from those of his predecessors. And what is surprising is the fact that Doe - an indigene, who professed to have assumed power to correct the political vices that were perpetrated against his "people" - was perceived in the end by the citizenry as the worst leader Liberia ever had. Doe's regime was so bad that most Liberians preferred oppression by the minority to oppression by their own people, who professed to have taken over to save them. As Cohen rightly noted, "within five years, the Doe regime went from the embodiment of indigenous majority rule to an oppressive government dominated by Liberia's most backward ethnic group. The other tribal people now regretted the ouster of the Americo-Liberians in 1980."²⁵²

When Liberians could no longer tolerate the despotism of Doe's regime, they rose against it, just as Doe and his military supporters had risen against the regime of President Tolbert. The end of Doe's rule marked a turning point in the history of Liberia. It ushered in the civil conflict that, to this day, has given Liberia a completely different face. The period was a culmination of many years of political tension that had been brewing in Liberia.

The argument of Rothchild and Lawson sums up the situation:

In its efforts to repress civil society, the state applies the mechanisms of coercion throughout the political domain in order to maintain control. In Sudan, Somalia, Liberia and Kenya, contemporary regimes have used different tactics – denial of the principle of proportionality in recruitment and resource allocation, inequitable tax policies, laws requiring cultural assimilation, disenfranchisement or irregular election,

²⁵² Ibid., p. 127.

and so forth – to translate their preferences into reality. Two of these countries, Somalia and Liberia have descended into anarchy as a result.²⁵³

(iii) The Trigger – Taylor’s Invasion

Our third element of early warning - immediate early warning - was the last straw that ushered in the Liberian civil war. It was an attempt to topple the Doe regime organized by Charles Taylor,²⁵⁴ an Americo-Liberian, with the support of other ethnic groups in Liberia under the aegis of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The NPFL assault was launched from Cote d’Ivoire across the border into Nimba County in Liberia on Christmas Eve 1989.

When Taylor launched his incursion, the general feeling within the Liberian ruling elite was that this was yet another coup attempt that could be easily defeated by the Liberian army. The Armed Forces of Liberia, buoyed by its previous successes against coup attempts in Liberia, confronted the incursion with little knowledge of the gravity of the threat posed in this particular case. Similarly, the American embassy in Monrovia was of the view that the Liberian army could easily deal with the threat it was confronted with. As will be indicated later in the discussion, this under-estimation of the capabilities of the NPFL enabled the group to slowly and gradually take control of much of Liberia.

Slowly, Liberia descended into anarchy and the main goal of Taylor and his group of insurgents was to unseat the Doe government. The expectation of many Liberians therefore was that this effort was going to be short lived. This was not to be the case.

²⁵³ Donald Rothchild & Letitia Lawson, “The Interactions Between State and Civil Society in Africa: From Deadlock to New Routines,” in John W. Harbeson, Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan (eds.), *Civil Society and the State in Africa* (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner, 1994), p. 271.

²⁵⁴ Charles Taylor served as Director-General of Liberia’s General Services Agency in Doe’s regime. He left the government for the United States after a short period where he began criticizing the Doe regime. The regime subsequently accused him of embezzling \$900,000 and requested extradition. Taylor was

The ranks of the NPFL were divided when Prince Johnson, one of Taylor's major ranking leaders, formed a rival faction, naming it the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL).

Immediately after this incident, events in Liberia began to unravel very quickly, resulting in an outright war in Monrovia with three principal contenders – the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) remnants loyal to Doe, the INPFL of Johnson and Taylor's NPFL.

What was to follow was a serious crisis leading to a brutal guerilla war, which was characterized by large-scale massacre of civilians, creating serious humanitarian emergencies. At the same time, the AFL, which was now a party to the conflict, mounted a series of operations against innocent citizens. According to some sources, there was an outcry of genocide against Doe's regime following the AFL's killings of civilians from the Gio and the Mano ethnic groups, whom they accused of rendering support to the rebels.²⁵⁵ The reaction from the NPFL rebels further exacerbated the crisis. The daily images from Liberia were those of horror and savagery and these were broadcast all over the world. The situation was made even worse by the killing and holding hostage of foreign nationals. Even the UN was not spared. The UN was forced to withdraw its personnel from Liberia after the AFL attacked a UN refugee compound, killing four and abducting 40.²⁵⁶

The most credible early warning signal yet was the growing number of internally displaced people and refugee populations generated by the NPFL invasion. This was a

interdicted in the United States and while awaiting extradition hearings, he managed to escape and came back to West Africa where he mobilized support and formed the NPFL.

clear sign that the situation in Liberia was deteriorating very fast and swift action was needed. In fact, the events in Liberia began to threaten the security situation in the sub-region and sub-regional leaders came to the realization that further instability in Liberia would adversely affect their own nations. This was only when the flood of fleeing Liberian refugees began to swell in neighboring countries – Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria. It was estimated that, by October 1990, Liberian refugees in neighboring states numbered more than 600,000.²⁵⁷ Given the realities they had to contend with, regional leaders, under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)²⁵⁸, began a desperate search for peace in Liberia.

An important component of prevention is early warning and the timing of the response that follows the warning signals. As noted in chapter one, Alexander George and Jane Holl got it right when they noted that, while there might be disagreement on the scope of preventive diplomacy and the strategies to be employed, there is no disagreement on the importance of obtaining early warning information.²⁵⁹ It should be noted however that, much as early warning is important, it is not an end in itself. It is important only so long as it is followed by early action.

The case of Liberia demonstrates how neighboring countries can quickly react to a deteriorating situation and develop local solutions to problems in their backyard. In Liberia, the world saw the first African intervention force created by sub-regional leaders

²⁵⁵ *Africa Research Bulletin*, 15 Feb. 1990, p. 9558, cited in Funmi Oloisakin, “UN Co-operation with Regional Organizations in Peacekeeping: The Experience of ECOMOG and UNOMIL in Liberia,” *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Autumn 1996, pp. 33-51

²⁵⁶ *Africa Research Bulletin*, 1-30 Sept. 1990, p. 9841, in *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ UNHCR report, cited in *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ ECOWAS is an economic organization that consists of the 16 countries of the sub-region: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

to handle the Liberian situation. This action had more to do with post-Cold War international dynamics than altruism – you either take charge of your backyard or perish, since no ‘big power’ is prepared to take the risk on your behalf.

From the substantial body of literature that aims at developing an early warning system, the crucial task that remains to be overcome is knowing exactly what types of events/activities provoke the intensification of conflict, how these events/activities can be well understood by the policymakers and how can the latter develop carefully targeted and timely policy responses to these events. Liberia was yet another test case for this puzzle.

As in many other similar conflicts in Africa, in Liberia policymakers either misread or simply ignored events/activities that were likely to provoke the intensification of conflict. If, as some analysts argue, the conflict in Liberia started in April 1980 with the overthrow of the government of William Tolbert, ending about a century and half of Americo-Liberian hegemony, then early-warning of the Liberian conflict goes back 9 years before the actual conflict began. In the 1980s, however, it was not possible for any sub-regional grouping to mount an intervention because of the Cold War political environment. And, in the case of Liberia, such a move would have been seriously resisted by the United States because of her special relationship with Liberia, which was seen as a strategic Cold War ally. Another reason why ECOWAS could not have responded to warning signals in Liberia emanating from the atrocities of the Doe regime in the 1980s was the fact that most West African countries at the time were ruled by dictators so sub-regional leaders would have been committing suicide by rising against

²⁵⁹ Alexander L. George and Jane E. Holl, “The Warning-Response Problem and Missed Opportunities in Preventive Diplomacy,” in Bruce Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed*, p. 21.

the government of Doe in Monrovia. In fact, for ECOWAS leaders, Liberia was not a case of lack of early warning information, but an instance of turning a blind eye to a terrible situation for the sake of guaranteeing their own continuous political survival.

The only country that could have acted to prevent Liberia's descent into anarchy was the United States. Seeing all global events from a Cold War perspective, the United States refused to raise a finger against an important ally. Even at a time when there was evidence of human rights abuses, the United States failed to take any decisive action to rein in President Doe. And when the situation was beyond repair, the United States' response was to leave Liberia to its fate.

The situation in Liberia continued to deteriorate until the arrival of the NPFL in late 1989. By that time, both the regional and global political environments had changed dramatically – the Cold War had ended and a vacuum had been created for willing regional and sub-regional actors to play a role in managing security in their backyards. In addition, there was also a dramatic change in the political environment in West Africa – most dictators had either transformed themselves into democrats or were being pressured to do so. As a result of these dynamics, ECOWAS leaders felt the moral burden to act to prevent Liberia from descending into anarchy. Even though laudable, ECOWAS began seriously tackling the Liberian crisis when it was six months old – in May 1990, at a time when it had moved beyond the pre-crisis stage. Even then, it would have been possible for ECOWAS to influence positively the events on the ground in Liberia if it had adopted the right strategies. Guided by the thinking that force could achieve the best results, ECOWAS leaders devoted their energies to seeking a military solution instead of a diplomatic one.

In May 1990 it was still possible for ECOWAS leaders to achieve a diplomatic solution if they had found a constructive way of containing Taylor and had paid more attention to some of his demands, since he was the main contender at the time and controlled most of Liberia. Instead, in a bid to accommodate the interests of a fellow head of state - Samuel Doe - sub-regional leaders were determined to stop Taylor's ambitious move to unseat the government of Doe in Monrovia. In addition, they were determined not to set a precedent by allowing Taylor an easy passage to the presidency. This was mainly because some of them had come to power in a similar manner to Doe and probably lacked any legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens. Allowing Taylor to take over Liberia would have sent signals to rebellious elements in the sub-region to rise against their leaders.

It is evident from the preceding analysis that, before ECOWAS leaders took on the initiative to intervene in Liberia, they had ample early warning information. Their reaction however was faulty, both in terms of its timing and strategy. In fact, they could not properly design appropriate strategies to deal with the threat on the ground, especially the real threat posed by Taylor and his NPFL forces.

(b) Strategies

Even though a number of groups were involved in trying to prevent Liberia's descent into total anarchy, the key player was ECOWAS. The emergence of ECOWAS as a peace broker in the sub-region in the 1990s can be traced to two significant factors. First, the outbreak of the Liberian conflict coincided with the end of the Cold War. The demise of the East-West rivalry did not lead to the anticipated result – greater attention given by the

West to Africa's problems. Instead, as Michael Ignatieff has argued, "huge sections of the world's population have won the right of self-determination on the cruelest possible terms: they have been simply left to fend for themselves. Not surprisingly, their nation-states are collapsing."²⁶⁰

Second, and related to the first point, the absence of superpower competition in the region created an opportunity for regional organizations to act proactively. As Michael Barnett has noted:

... whereas during the Cold War most regional organizations were imprinted by superpower competition, since its demise and the retreat of the superpowers many regional organizations are capitalizing on the power vacuum, first and foremost, to create new mechanisms to foster regional security and order, if not 'zones of peace', and secondarily, to fulfill the spirit of Chapter VIII.²⁶¹

When ECOWAS first took on the challenge of averting escalation of conflict in Liberia, one of the key preventive initiatives taken was the formulation of a peace plan. This peace plan contained the following:

1. Immediate cease-fire.
2. The establishment and deployment of ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to monitor the observance of the cease-fire by all sides to the conflict.
3. The establishment of an interim government that would exclude Sergeant Doe and Charles Taylor.

²⁶⁰ Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging*, Toronto: Penguin, 1993, p. 8.

²⁶¹ Michael Barnett, "Partners In Peace? The UN, regional organizations, and peace-keeping", *Review of International Studies* (1995), 21, 411-433.

4. The holding of free and fair elections within a year, under international supervision and observation.²⁶²

At an ECOWAS summit held in Banjul, The Gambia, in May 1990, the Standing Mediation Committee – SMC – was established, consisting of The Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Togo. It was the Committee's responsibility to oversee the implementation of the peace plan. The plan had the support of both the OAU and the United Nations but was rejected by Charles Taylor, for obvious reasons. Two francophone countries in the region - Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso - also rejected the peace plan.²⁶³ These oppositions notwithstanding, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was established on August 7, 1990. The legal instruments establishing the force stipulated that ECOMOG be composed of military contingents drawn from the member states of the SMC as well as from Guinea and Sierra Leone. Probably due to the organization's lack of experience in the diplomacy of multilateral security, ECOMOG was given a mandate that was difficult to execute if the force was to remain neutral. ECOMOG was "to conduct military operations for the purpose of monitoring the cease-fire, restoring law and order and to create the necessary conditions for free and fair elections to be held in Liberia."²⁶⁴

²⁶² See Clement Adibe, "The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 471-488, 1997.

²⁶³ Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso opposed the plan for two principal reasons: first there exists some traditional colonial rivalries between the anglophone and francophone countries and this was coupled with the fact the francophone countries suspected that the anglophone countries, especially Nigeria, were going to use Liberia to maintain their dominance in the region. Second, personal reasons were at play. President Houphouet-Boigny of Ivory Coast at the time disliked Doe for having violently seized power and executed former Liberian officials. The widow of A. B. Tolbert (the brother of President William Tolbert), Daise Tolbert, was Houphouet-Boigny's goddaughter she later married Blaise Compaore, president of Burkina Faso. Houphouet-Boigny and Compaore were therefore the two strong supporters of Charles Taylor in the region. Taylor launched his insurgency from Houphouet-Boigny's territory.

²⁶⁴ "ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee," Decision A/DEC, August 1, 1990, on the Cease-fire and Establishment of an ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group for Liberia, Banjul, Republic of the Gambia,

The case of Liberia is an interesting one given that the United States had 'special' ties with its peoples and was so involved there during much of the Cold War. As indicated earlier, the Doe government was a major recipient of US aid during the 1980s. When the conflict between Taylor and Doe escalated, there was the faint hope that at the minimum the United States would intervene. United Nations Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, was alleged to have categorically stated that the UN would not intervene in Liberia. The United States, with 2,000 Marines off the Liberian coast, preferred to 'watch from a distance.'²⁶⁵ As a result, the relatively powerless ECOWAS took on the Liberian challenge when the conflict was less than five months old. At the time, Salim Ahmed Salim, the secretary-general of the OAU, justified ECOWAS' intervention: "Africans are one people. It is hence unacceptable that a part of that people should stand in silence and in seeming helplessness when another part is suffering."²⁶⁶

Some analysts on Liberia however did not agree with the Secretary General's assertion. George Klay Kieh, Jr., for example, has written that ECOWAS' decision to intervene transcended primordial and humanitarian concerns. He contends that the Liberian conflict directly affected, and still does, the member countries in two major ways. First, several of their citizens who were resident in Liberia were being killed while others were taken hostages (mainly by Taylor's NPFL). Second, member states were concerned that the Liberian civil war could have a domino effect on the rest of the region. This fear is based on the fact that the preponderant majority of the member states of

August 7, 1990; in Mark Weller, ed., *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement: The Liberian Crisis*, Cambridge International Document Series, Vol. 6, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 68.

²⁶⁵ See Chike Akabogu, "ECOWAS Takes The Initiative," in M. A. Vogt, ed., *The Liberian Crisis and ECOMOG: A Bold Attempt at Regional Peace Keeping*, Lagos: Gabumo Publishing, 1992, pp: 73-93.

²⁶⁶ *West Africa*, Oct. 22-28, 1990, p. 2714.

ECOWAS are governed by repressive regimes.²⁶⁷ The movement of peoples fleeing the conflict across borders, combined with the constantly shifting military alliances, could prove too much for these regimes to handle.²⁶⁸

All said, ECOWAS took a bold step and sent ECOMOG into Liberia with a mandate that covered a wide range of peaceful and forceful instruments designed to stem the violence and to bring the belligerents to the table. Apart from the military operations, sub-regional leaders engaged in a combination of mediation, conciliation and bilateral negotiations. The following section evaluates all these instruments.

(i) Peacekeeping

The concept of peacekeeping, even though not specifically mentioned in the Charter of the UN, was introduced to enhance Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which provides for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Within ECOWAS, the 1981 Protocol on Mutual Assistance and Defence empowers member states to intervene militarily when the security of a member is threatened.²⁶⁹ And ECOWAS was quick to invoke this protocol even though critics argued that the Liberian situation does not fit the Protocol's definition of 'threat to a member states.'

As noted in chapter one, a key criticism within the literature points to the dynamic nature of conflict and its changing circumstances in terms of intensity and the number of

²⁶⁷ George Klay Kieh, Jr., "The Obstacles to the Peaceful Resolution of the Liberian Civil Conflict," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 17, 1994, pp. 97-108.

²⁶⁸ Before ECOMOG went into Liberia in August 1990, close to a million Liberian refugees had moved across borders into neighboring countries: Nigeria 141,000; Guinea 320,000; Cote D'Ivoire 420,000. For details on this see Osioma B. C. Nwolise, "The Internationalisation of the Liberian Crisis and Its Effects on West Africa," in M. A. Vogt, ed., *The Liberian Crisis and ECOMOG*, pp: 55-72.

²⁶⁹ See Appendix 3 "Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence," in M. A. Vogt, ed., *The Liberian Crisis and ECOMOG*, pp. 35-46.s

actors engaged. This criticism suggests that the failure of missions to adapt to the changing conditions on the ground is a determining factor in explaining the lackluster performance of recent missions, including that of ECOMOG.

The peacekeeping efforts in Liberia assumed the form of an armed intervention by a consortium of African states under the aegis of ECOMOG. From the onset, the peacekeepers were mandated by ECOWAS to perform both the roles of a nurse and a great surgeon, at a time when the conflict had crossed the 'pre-crisis' threshold and was heading to 'escalation'. The 'peacekeepers' went into Liberia without any cease-fire on the ground and, in fact, without any peace to keep, yet they were assigned peacekeeping duties. The absence of a clear and enforceable mandate without doubt created a problem for ECOMOG and brought to the fore the limitations of pre-Cold War classic peacekeeping in post-Cold War civil war situations.

There is some indication that the member states were moved by humanitarian concerns - specifically, the mass killings taking place in Liberia and the influx of refugees into most countries in the sub-region. And this may have had an impact on the decision to develop a comprehensive solution to the problem. Unfortunately, a key element required for a peaceful approach was missing - the consent of the NPFL - the principle faction in the conflict. In retrospect, a different, more forceful approach might have been appropriate right from the onset. But ECOWAS was far from properly equipped to carry out such a mandate and a more forceful intervention might have had the consequence of escalating tensions rather than reducing them. Based on insights from the Bosnia experience, Vogt (1992) has rightly noted:

... when a multilateral force is emplaced among forces that are not very cooperative and when some of them are actively hostile and aggressive to the force, peace-keeping

in the classic conception of the force as one that uses minimum force and that avoids active participation in combat, becomes a suicidal objective.²⁷⁰

Thus, ECOMOG's peacekeeping effort in Liberia had become counter-productive in the face of mounting casualties and rising escalation in the conflict. The obvious thing to do when diplomacy fails is to resort to the use of force and that is exactly what ECOWAS did.

(ii) *Peace Enforcement*

With Vogt's thoughts in mind it would seem obvious that the use of force in efforts to reduce violent intrastate conflict constitutes a basic violation of impartiality. Some, like Alan James, have argued that favoritism in intrastate conflicts is more likely to make peacekeepers targets rather than intermediaries.²⁷¹

In the face of stiff opposition from Taylor's forces and the paralysis of social order in Liberia, ECOWAS leaders quickly realized that Chapter six peacekeeping was not the right strategy to adopt. In September 1990, after only a few weeks of deployment in Liberia its mandate was readjusted to include a 'limited offensive' so as to allow ECOMOG to elicit compliance from the various factions, especially the NPFL. The new mandate brought in a Field Commander who was ordered by the SMC to effect the pacification of the country so as to deter continued attacks on ECOMOG and innocent

²⁷⁰ M. A. Vogt, "The Problems and Challenges of Peace-Making: From Peace-Keeping To Peace Enforcement," in M. A. Vogt, ed., *The Liberian Crisis and ECOMOG*, p. 155.

²⁷¹ See Alan James, "Peacekeeping and Ethnic Conflict," in David Carment and Patrick James, eds., *Peace in The Midst of Wars: Preventing and Managing International Ethnic Conflicts*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998, pp. 163-193.

civilians.²⁷² In addition, the force was ordered “to try and prevent arms and ammunition continuing to come into the rebel forces, who were still not subscribing to a ceasefire.”²⁷³

The overall objective of this strategy was aimed at driving Taylor’s forces out of Monrovia and liberating some essential services - the central power plant and the main water processing plant - from rebel hands.²⁷⁴ Not surprisingly, ECOMOG’s offensive intended to push the NPFL forces out of Monrovia was fiercely resisted, resulting in the exchange of fire between the now ‘peace enforcers’ and Taylor’s forces (at the time of ECOMOG’s entry into Liberia, NPFL controlled about 95 per cent of Liberian territory).

According to Adibe, the ECOMOG offensive against the NPFL produced three unpleasant consequences, which greatly jeopardized the mission’s chances of success.²⁷⁵ First, it unnecessarily escalated the conflict by pitting the ‘peacekeepers’ against one of the parties to the conflict in a way that created a disturbing disequilibrium. Rather than eliminating Taylor’s forces altogether from the picture, their influence was simply reduced. ECOMOG’s efforts diminished the presence and power of one of the local factions, thereby distorting the correlation of forces in the local arena. By dislodging NPFL militia from the positions that they had long occupied in Monrovia, ECOMOG forces arbitrarily enhanced the presence of the main rival militia, the INPFL. On September 9, 1990, the INPFL took maximum advantage of its enhanced profile to abduct and kill President Samuel Doe on the premises of ECOMOG headquarters. Second, as Adibe argues, perceptions of ECOMOG impartiality quickly disappeared, replaced by a widespread perception within and outside West Africa that ECOMOG had

²⁷² M. A. Vogt, “The Problems and Challenges of Peace-Making: From Peace-Keeping to Peace Enforcement,” in M. A. Vogt, ed., *The Liberian Crisis and ECOMOG*, p. 155.

²⁷³ *African Research Bulletin*, Vol. 27, No. 10, October 1-31, 1990, pp. 9872-9873 cited in *Ibid*.

²⁷⁴ M. A. Vogt, *op cit.*, in note 24.

indeed become a warring faction in the Liberian conflict. This perception was further strengthened by a series of deadly encounters between ECOMOG and various factions²⁷⁶ from 1990 onwards.²⁷⁷

In sum, although ECOMOG was referred to as a ‘peacekeeping force,’ the NPFL threat to resist it as illegal and unwelcome excluded any notion of consent, a key ingredient in conventional peacekeeping. As a senior UN official put it, “Pushing Taylor out of Monrovia by force is hardly peacekeeping.”²⁷⁸ However, as we noted above, in the face of atrocities and mass killings, there is a strong argument in favour of ECOMOG’s forceful strategy – designed to halt the killings that were rampant at the time.²⁷⁹ It is somewhat ironic that this forceful strategy could not have been implemented without the consent of some of the parties to the conflict.

(iii) Diplomacy

As noted before, ECOWAS combined force with diplomacy in its handling of the Liberian crisis. ECOWAS’ diplomacy in Liberia was twin-tracked: first, the organization engaged civil society groups in Liberia as well made efforts to get an interim government in place in Monrovia even as ECOMOG tackled the military aspect of the intervention. Second, ECOWAS sponsored a series of peace talks, beginning from

²⁷⁵ Adibe, *op cit.*, in note 29.

²⁷⁶ Apart from the initial three factions - NPFL, AFL, INPFL, many other splinter groups emerged during the course of the conflict. They include: Liberia Peace Council (LPC), Lofa Defence Force (LDF), United Liberation Movement(s) of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) K-Kroma and J-Johnson) and National Patriotic Front of Liberia - Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC).

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ See Colin Scott in collaboration with Larry Minear and Thomas G. Weiss, “Humanitarian Action and Security in Liberia 1989-1994,” *Occasional Paper #20* (Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies), p. 9.

²⁷⁹ In August 1990, both rebel and government forces were alleged to have been involved in the indiscriminate massacre of civilians. For example, Doe’s forces murdered about 600 civilians who took

Cotonou (July, 1993) to Abuja (August, 1995), aimed at bringing the various factions to the table to strike a negotiated settlement to the crisis; the Abuja Accord is one such initiative. I now discuss these in turn.

Civil Society Initiatives and the Transitional Government

In May 1990, as ECOWAS leaders were busy trying to find a solution to the Liberian crisis, civil society groups, mainly religious groups, were also active in trying to find a solution from within. The Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) and the National Muslim Council of Liberia (NMCL) established the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC). Representing the two dominant religions in Liberia, the IFMC benefited from a strong following as well as a strong moral authority. It therefore took advantage of its visibility in Liberian society to try to influence events in Liberia at the time by playing an active role in the search for peace.²⁸⁰

These religious groups were probably motivated by two important reasons. First, as Liberians and religious groups, they felt they had a moral obligation to do something to alleviate the suffering of their people. Second, perhaps because the international community was not making any efforts to resolve the unfolding crisis, they felt morally obliged to get involved in the crisis as neutral mediators. The IFMC is credited with the first major attempt at facilitating a dialogue between the two initial warring factions - the NPFL and the AFL - during the early stages of the conflict. In June 1990, it managed to bring the factions together for comprehensive peace talks at the US Embassy in

refuge in the St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Monrovia. The NPFL also targeted citizens of the SMC member-countries as well as foreign journalists. For a detailed discussion see, Nwolise, *op cit.*, in note 28.
²⁸⁰ See Samuel Kofi Woods, "Civic Initiatives in the Peace Process", *ACCORD*, www.c-r.org/accord/accord1/woods.htm.

Freetown, Sierra Leone.²⁸¹ Even though the talks stalled on the issue of the status of President Doe, it represented a bold step on the part of civil society groups in Liberia. Some of its prescriptions – ceasefire, military monitoring and the establishment of an interim government – were eventually adopted by ECOWAS as part of its comprehensive peace plan.

The IFMC, after this first failed attempt and given the deteriorating situation on the ground, conceded that the prospects for any diplomatic solution were remote without the threat of military force. By this time, ECOWAS leaders had already put together their comprehensive peace plan and convened a national conference to: (1) appoint an Interim government of National Unity (IGNU) and (2) set a force to monitor the observance of the ‘ceasefire’ on the ground (see peace plan, note 31 above). At this conference, which, as noted already, was boycotted by the NPFL and strongly opposed by some countries in the region, the IFMC played a key role and was identified as the only neutral institution to participate in the deliberations.²⁸²

The Interim Government of National Unity

One of the key and most important political strategies adopted by ECOWAS in formulating a peace plan for Liberia was putting in place a government of national unity in Monrovia. The aim of such a government was two-fold. First it was aimed at slowing, if not averting, the downward slide of the Liberian state towards complete collapse; and second, it was to serve as an ECOWAS mouthpiece on the ground in Monrovia. Beyond these two primary reasons, the establishment of such an all-inclusive governing body, it

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

was hoped, would help stop the fighting and get the various factions to submit themselves to a political solution.²⁸³

Thus, after a semblance of security and order was re-established in Monrovia, an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) was set up to administer the country under Amos Sawyer, a professor at the University of Liberia. Although organized and sustained by ECOMOG to govern the entire country, in reality the writ and presence of IGNU were never established beyond Monrovia. Taylor and the NPFL established a rival government in Gbarnga, arguing its legitimacy on the basis that his faction controlled up to 80 per cent of the Liberian land mass.²⁸⁴ The implication of this kind of split between the interim government and the biggest faction is that the peace arrangement is a failure since it has not been able to get the consent of all the parties to the crisis, particularly the largest faction that wielded a lot of influence and the potential to spoil the peace.

Thus, as one would expect, politically, IGNU was effective only in Monrovia under the protection of ECOMOG, and Charles Taylor ruled an area that was beginning to take on the characteristics of an alternative state with its own capital (Gbarnga), police organization, embryo administration, and currency.²⁸⁵

During the negotiations leading to the later Cotonou Accord, for instance, IGNU, in the weakest bargaining position with its fortunes tied to ECOMOG, was forced to make a number of concessions to placate the NPFL. Although IGNU had proposed that the executive branch of government be made up of the presidency, to be held by nominees of the Interim Government, and two vice-presidents representing NPFL and United

²⁸³ One of the conditions for the establishment of the interim government was that none of the leaders of the warring factions will take part in such a body. This way, it will be neutral and acceptable to all the factions. See for example, Abiodun Alao, *The Burden of Collective Goodwill: The international involvement in the Liberian Civil War*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998, p. 79.

Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), the NPFL insisted on a five-member Council of State (COS), three of whose members were to be nominated by the three parties and two others to be selected from a list of nine nominees through a process of consultation. IGNU's proposal to secure its authority during the interim process were not accepted. Perhaps ECOMOG was seeking an exit from the impasse and pressured Amos Sawyer to accommodate the NPFL proposals.²⁸⁶

It should be noted that in its design of a peace formula for Liberia, ECOWAS was a bit over ambitious and determined to implement its plan irrespective of the reality on the ground. Consumed by a desire to rein in Taylor and set a precedent, the regional organization failed to proceed with caution. Like its military formula, the diplomatic formula was also of very limited success. It is difficult to imagine that there can be an interim government in place in Liberia when there is no cease-fire that is respected by all the factions to the conflict.

For one thing, it was not surprising that Taylor refused to recognize any effort by ECOWAS to bring peace to Liberia mainly because at the time of ECOWAS' intervention, he controlled a major chunk of the Liberian territory and as a result could not understand why he should give in to an interim government that was supported by an "outside" power.

²⁸⁴ Alao et al., p. 35.

²⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 42.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

The Abuja Accord

Signed in August 1995 in the Nigerian capital of Abuja, this agreement basically built on some of the previous accords. It contained 16 articles, the key points of which are as follows:

- Extended the council of state to six members, appointing a third civilian, Mr. Wilton Sankawulo, as chairman;
- Named Liberian Peace Council (LPC)'s George Boley as 'Coalition' representative on the council;
- Reasserted the allocation of ministries, public corporations and autonomous agencies agreed after the Cotonou Accord, confirming that IGNU posts would be ceded to LPC/Coalition members;
- Partially accommodated ULIMO-J (Roosevelt Johnson faction) without giving them representation on the council of state;
- Office holders in the LNTG permitted to contest future election;
- Cease-fire in force from 26 August with installation of council of state soon after;
- Council of state to have a life span of approximately twelve months.²⁸⁷

The Abuja Accord, unlike the numerous accords before it, was hailed as having managed to bring the leaders of all warring factions into the transitional government. After the agreement was signed, the thorny issue of how the six-member council of state would be constituted was resolved with the inclusion of the leaders of the major factions: Charles Taylor from the NPFL, Alhaji Kromah from ULIMO and George Boley from the

²⁸⁷ "Abuja Accord," *Accord*, http://www.c-r.org/cr/accord/sum_abuja.htm, Accessed: 4/4/98.

LPC.²⁸⁸ The peaceful formation of the council of state was not the end of the conflict, however, nor ECOMOG's involvement in it.

Soon after it was constituted, the collective presidency was plunged into crisis as a power struggle ensued between its members over appointments to positions in government. And to compound issues, factional in-fighting broke out within ULIMO between Alhaji Kroma - the faction leader and a signatory to the Abuja Accord - and Roosevelt Johnson, forcing the latter to form his own wing: ULIMO-J.²⁸⁹ Abiodun Alao was probably right when he observed that:

The Abuja Accord managed to bring the leaders of all the warring factions into the transitional government, which was installed with due ceremony in September 1995. As such, it represents in many ways the fulfillment of the aspirations of the post-Cotonou peace process. It did not however bring peace to Liberia. Discontent continued to fester within groups and individuals who believed themselves sidelined in the settlement. Factions continued to guard their territorial and commercial resources jealously, with ongoing violence between NPFL and LPC and between various sub-groupings of ULIMO.²⁹⁰

Alao's observation is very much to the point. In the resolution of conflicts, there is sometimes the likelihood of some parties being unhappy about the terms of agreements that they initialed and this brings about spoiler problems. As Stephen J. Stedman has noted:

Peace creates spoilers because it is rare in civil wars for all leaders and factions to see peace as beneficial. Even if all parties come to value peace, they rarely do so simultaneously, and they often strongly disagree over the terms of an acceptable peace. A negotiated peace often has losers: leaders and factions who do not achieve their war aims. Nor can every war find a compromise solution that addresses the demands of all the warring parties.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ See *West Africa* (London), 25-31 December 1995, and 1-7 January 1996, p. 1993.

²⁸⁹ *West Africa*, (London), 18-24 March 1996, pp. 422-423. Such split in factions has very serious repercussions for any peace process.

²⁹⁰ Charles Abiodun Alao, "Commentary on the Accords," *Accord*, <http://www.c-r.org/cr/accord/alao.htm>, Accessed: 2/23/98.

²⁹¹ Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2, fall 1997, pp. 5-53.

Consequently, this issue made the Abuja Accord, like all the previous accords, inoperable. Its aftermath was marked by a series of hostilities. For example, according to a *West Africa* report, on December 28 1995, elements of ULIMO-J²⁹² ambushed Nigerian ECOMOG forces attempting to disarm the militias. This was followed by a heavy artillery bombardment of ECOMOG's base in the provincial town of Tubmanburg in the diamond-rich Bomi County.²⁹³ Following this incident, tension increased and security deteriorated rapidly, leading to the indefinite suspension of the ongoing disarmament operation in the Liberian hinterland.²⁹⁴

When the council of state ordered the arrest of Roosevelt Johnson for his alleged responsibility for the ambush of the ECOMOG soldiers, renewed violence was triggered leading to a return to street fighting in Monrovia and yet another round of refugee flows. The gravity of the situation led US forces to evacuate all foreign nationals from Monrovia.²⁹⁵

When the disturbances died down, a summer meeting was called by ECOWAS in Accra, Ghana. This was an attempt to prevent the complete collapse of the Abuja agreement. On 17 August 1996, the leaders of Liberia's factions agreed to 'a Revised Version of the Abuja Accord' and appointed Ruth Perry to replace Wilton Sankawulo as the chair of the Council of State.²⁹⁶ The key elements of the revised Abuja Accord were: implementation of disarmament and demobilization by 31 January 1997; dissolution of all factional militia by the end of February 1997; general elections by 31 May 1997; and

²⁹² ULIMO-J was not a signatory to the Abuja Accord.

²⁹³ *West Africa* (London), 22-28 January 1996, pp. 97-99.

²⁹⁴ See Clement E. Adibe, "The Liberian Conflict,"

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Max Ahmadu Sessay, "Politics and society in post-war Liberia," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1996, p. 402, in Clement E. Adibe, "The Liberian Conflict."

formation of a national government by 15 June 1997.²⁹⁷ The revised Abuja Accord was the last agreement to be signed by the Liberian factions before the 1997 elections; it has taken Liberia to its first 'post-conflict' government elected through multi-party elections; and an uneasy peace and sporadic clashes between government forces and rebel groups based in the Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone common border area.

This revised agreement worked as planned, albeit with minor hitches. According to Adibe, the disarmament and demobilization phase proceeded without any major hitches and the implementation of the agreement went on smoothly.²⁹⁸ Why did this revised Abuja Accord succeed better than all the agreements before it? Adibe argues that the parties evolved a *modus operandi* based primarily on the personal chemistry that existed between Charles Taylor and General Sani Abacha, Nigeria's military ruler.²⁹⁹ Abacha's recognition of Taylor was an act that was overdue, given the clout Taylor wielded in the conflict. Indeed, the post-Abuja Accord era saw an Abacha-Taylor rapprochement. According to Adekeye Adebajo, the truculent warlord spent four days in Abuja in June 1996 with Nigeria's General Sani Abacha in a rapprochement every bit as dramatic as that between the US and the Somali warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed. In both cases, there was a change of policy from pursuing to protecting warlords.³⁰⁰ Nigeria's foreign minister is also said to have hosted Charles Taylor's wedding. Taylor thenceforth emerged as an Abacha favorite.³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Adibe, "The Liberian Conflict."

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Adekeye Adebajo, "Farewell to Arms?" *West Africa* (London), 25-31 December 1995 and 1-7 January 1996, p. 1993.

³⁰¹ Nigeria was vehemently opposed Taylor's ambition of becoming President of Liberia. It will be recalled that Nigeria was the main architect of ECOMOG which entered Liberia at a time when Taylor was almost about to take over Monrovia. And because Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso supported Taylor, Nigeria

If this was the case, then ECOWAS leaders, particularly the ‘strong-man’ Sani Abacha, have come to realize the political clout that Charles Taylor wields in the peace process and hence the need to align themselves with him instead of sidelining him as had been the case before. The sub-regional leaders should have done six years before, in 1990 what they did in 1996. Recognizing Taylor’s clout at the beginning of the conflict would probably have succeeded in ending the crisis.

Another reason why the revised Abuja Accord worked, according to Andy Carl and Jeremy Armon, was the proposal for ECOWAS-wide sanctions on ‘persons found guilty of acts capable of obstructing the peace plan.’ These measures included travel and residence restrictions, the freezing of business assets, exclusion from participation in the Liberian election process and expulsion of violators’ families from West Africa. ECOWAS also expressed its willingness to request international visa restrictions on accord violators and to invoke an OAU resolution calling for the establishment of a Liberian war crimes tribunal.³⁰² This ECOWAS action - resort to sanctions if need be - is akin to what Zartman terms the role of a mediator as a *manipulator*. Zartman has argued that mediators must sometimes act as manipulators, with maximum involvement that makes them a party in the solution, if not in the dispute. The manipulator is required to use his power to bring the parties to an agreement, pushing and pulling them away from conflict and into resolution.³⁰³

consistently opposed Taylor. Being the de facto hegemon of West Africa, Nigeria came to be seen as a king-maker in Liberia. As a result, its political leanings had a positive impact on the peace process.

³⁰² Andy Carl and Jeremy Armon, “Preface,” *Accord* <http://www.c-r.org/cr/accord/preface.htm>, Accessed, 2/23/98.

³⁰³ I. William Zartman, “Bargaining and Conflict Resolution,” in Edward A. Kolodziej and Roger E. Kanet, eds., *Coping with Conflict after the Cold War*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 281.

Conflict theorists such as Stedman will probably argue that the above explanations regarding the workable nature of the revised Abuja Accord are not sufficient. He instead will provide an alternative argument. Talking about conditions favoring negotiated settlements in civil wars, Stedman has argued that two factors contribute to a decision to sign a peace agreement. First, the greater the fear of what will happen if the war continues, the greater the willingness to reach a negotiated settlement. The prospect of greater pain and the impending loss of the resources needed to fight creates pressures for negotiation. Second, the lesser the fear of the consequences of settlement, the greater the willingness to reach a negotiated settlement. Parties are more likely to sign an agreement if they believe that it will provide security.³⁰⁴

At the Abuja Accords stage, the factions had been fighting for a period of almost six years. This is a long enough period to make fighters tired of continued fighting, especially in this case when most of the fighters were child soldiers. A child soldier, Karsor Zazaboi, recruited by the NPFL when he was 9 years old and who fought until he was 15 had this to say: "I fought to liberate my country, but at this present time, we have no enemy. Our brothers and sisters are dying. *We're tired*, and it's time to go back to school."³⁰⁵ (Italics mine). Therefore, with worn-out child soldiers, the warlords might have come to the realization that it was dangerous to continue fighting.

To the extent that the above is true, then Stedman's second argument holds. If there is a fear for continued fighting in the camps of all the factions, then all of them will be prone to accept a settlement. Therefore, the fear of the consequences of settlement will

³⁰⁴ Stephen John Stedman, "Negotiation and Mediation in Internal Conflict," in Michael E. Brown, Ed., *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, p. 351.

³⁰⁵ "Liberian fighters trade guns for food, education," *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), January 31, 1997, p. 17.

be less. For fear of the revised Abuja Accord being derailed like all its predecessors, the United States and other West European donors lent their support to the ECOWAS final initiative. The United States sent a Special Presidential Envoy in the person of Howard Jeter to assist in the peace process.³⁰⁶ Also, as an indicator of ECOWAS determination to ensure the success of the revised Abuja Accord, General Abacha, 1996-97 ECOWAS chairman, named one of his top military commanders, Major General Victor Malu, as head of ECOMOG forces in Liberia. The United States was said to have matched ECOWAS' determination by appropriating more than \$30 million to give ECOMOG a state-of-the-art logistical capability. West European donors made vital contributions mainly in the form of trucks and jeeps.³⁰⁷

The willingness of the warring factions, coupled with the newfound abilities of ECOMOG, enabled the revised Abuja Accord to take hold. By the January 1997 deadline for disarmament and demobilization, ECOMOG had achieved what most international observers agree was substantial disarmament of the warring factions, albeit with a considerable number of weapons still hidden.³⁰⁸ Lynne Mason of the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, a UN site coordinator at the Gbarnga disarmament camp in central Liberia, the stronghold of warlord Charles Taylor, had this to say concerning disarmament in Liberia: "This is a real surprise. I didn't ever think this would happen."³⁰⁹

³⁰⁶ See "Backgrounder: Liberians go to the Polls July 19," *Relief Web*, <http://www.reliefweb.int>, Accessed: 4/6/98.

³⁰⁷ See *ibid.* The tough new military leadership and reliable means of transportation and communication is said to have boosted ECOMOG's capabilities to confront the very difficult task of ensuring that all factions comply with the latest agreement by allowing their combatants to disarm.

³⁰⁸ See for example "Backgrounder: Liberians go to the Polls July 19" and *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), January 31 1997, p. 17.

³⁰⁹ *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), January 31 1997, p. 17.

The aftermath of the Abuja agreements saw most of the warring factions laying down their arms. Elections were subsequently organized and Charles Taylor achieved through the ballot what he could not achieve with the bullet. The key question, however, is what was the effect of the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia?

In conflict prevention, early warning is important but it is not an end in itself. To be useful, warning signals have to be accompanied by the appropriate strategies and, most importantly, as just discussed, the timing must be right. Therefore, depending on the available signals, policymakers have to make a choice of strategy – one that is appropriate to the situation. As noted already, the literature generally points towards the use of ‘mixed strategies’ since there cannot be a ‘one size fits all’ preventive strategy. Conflict is dynamic, so must be the strategies used to deal with it.

Diplomatic strategies to prevent conflicts usually proceed incrementally – from ‘soft’ to ‘hard’ diplomacy. Third parties generally begin with initiatives that are geared towards bringing the contending parties to the table to find a political settlement acceptable to both parties. This is typical political preventive diplomacy and is supposed to be complemented by coercive diplomacy just in case it fails to achieve the desired results. Coercive diplomacy can either be economic and/or military. Economic coercion is when belligerents are threatened with sanctions, withdrawal of aid or other forms of economic punishment if they fail to comply or respect the terms a negotiated political settlement. Military coercion involves the threat of use of armed force either to elicit compliance from belligerents – peace enforcement, or to stand in between the belligerents so as they respect the provisions of a settlement – peacekeeping.

ECOWAS diplomacy in Liberia was a mixed bag. In May 1990 when ECOWAS leaders met in The Gambia and designed a peace plan for Liberia, they envisaged having a cease-fire, which would be monitored by ECOMOG. There was therefore the presumption that they were going to engage themselves in high level diplomatic efforts to find a political settlement acceptable to the two parties – Doe’s AFL and Taylor’s NPFL. A close look at the initial stages of the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia reveals that either ECOWAS leaders did not have the patience usually associated with diplomatic negotiation or they simply paid lip service to it. As I noted elsewhere in this discussion, even before they could secure a cease-fire, ECOMOG troops were on the ground in Liberia as ‘peace-keepers’.

ECOMOG’s initial strategy was to perform classic peacekeeping operation. This was a terrible mistake since it was not possible to keep the peace when there was no cease-fire. It is worth noting that ECOMOG forces landed on the beaches of Monrovia in August 1990 amidst hostile fire.³¹⁰ They were confronted by three contending factions: the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) eagerly offered cooperation, while Taylor’s NPFL artillery quickly zeroed in on ECOMOG forces. It was this decision to work alongside two of the factions that proved the undoing of ECOMOG. According to Herbert Howe, the INPFL and the AFL cooperated with ECOMOG for two self-serving reasons: each was too weak to challenge ECOMOG directly, but each could benefit from ECOMOG’s protection and from any destruction ECOMOG inflicted upon Taylor.³¹¹

³¹⁰ The initial troop-strength was about 2,700 comprising of contingents from the member countries of the SMC.

³¹¹ Herbert Howe, “Lessons of Liberia”, pp. 145-176.

ECOMOG's cooperation with the two factions was necessary because of its initial approach. As Richard Betts argues, intervention cannot hope to maintain impartiality if the form of forceful intervention is limited in scope.³¹² He maintains that only in instances where the outside power takes complete command of the situation and imposes a peace settlement will the intervention result in stability. More limited forms of intervention undertaken with the goal of impartiality will usually keep either belligerent from defeating the other, but will not stop the adversaries from waging war in an attempt to do so.³¹³

Betts calls for the recognition of what he considers the hard realities of international conflict and the role of the intervener. First, that the intervening force must recognize that to make peace is to decide who rules. The intervening force should have no illusions as to what the application of force will accomplish: victory for one faction over the other. Second, the intervener must avoid half-measures, because limited intervention will only create confusions within the belligerents' calculations for victory and create false hopes for victory – thereby increasing the level of violence. Third, Betts counsels that one should not “confuse peace with justice” and that putting an end to the killing should be the intervener's first priority – not allocating justice within the conflict-ravaged society. Finally, Betts cautions that intervention should be consistent with the interveners' military capabilities and their willingness to engage belligerents with the use of force. In

³¹² Richard K. Betts, “The Delusion of Impartial Intervention,” in Chester A. Crocker and Fen Osler Hampson, eds., *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996, pp. 333-343.

³¹³ Betts uses the examples of UN intervention in Bosnia, US intervention in Somalia, and US and UN intervention in Haiti to underscore his argument. He argues that impartial intervention can work in more limited instances – such as the ceasefire mediation between Iran and Iraq and the political receivership of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia – but that these instances prove only that impartiality works best where intervention is needed least, where wars have “burned out” and the fighting factions need only the good offices of mediators to end the fighting formally.

retrospect, one could argue that, right from the beginning, ECOMOG should have gone into Liberia to enforce instead of keep peace since there was no cease-fire on the ground.

Like Betts, Rothchild and Lake see evidence of a movement towards a norm of collective intervention in a wide range of situations, including genocide, interference with the delivery of relief, violation of ceasefire agreements, collapse of civil order, and irregular interruption of democratic governance.³¹⁴ Coercive intervention, they argue, has two primary effects.

First, it can alter the internal balance of ethnic power. This can be useful in equalizing the forces and creating a “hurting stalemate” in which neither side can be victorious, and thus lead to a negotiated settlement. However, it can also lead to situations wherein the intervention emboldens the weaker party to the conflict, encouraging it to increase its demands and thus prolong the conflict. Accordingly, Rothchild and Lake argue that pressure must be exerted on both sides to moderate their demands. The second primary effect of such intervention is to provide guarantees between the warring parties. They are of the view that this requires substantial follow-up by the intervening power or some other credible actor to ensure that this contract is not exploited in the future and used to re-ignite violence. They conclude that, on average, external interventions are not likely to solve the underlying problems associated with ethnic insecurity and violence or to change the local balance of power between parties.

In general, the conclusions that can be taken from these analyses for the purposes of this chapter are (1) the assumption that interveners must be perceived and act as impartial is flawed, and (2) an intervener should not be discredited in seeing the conflict reach a

specific outcome. Indeed as Zartman and Touval argue, a prospective intervener may be more effective in achieving a stable short-term outcome when the third-party has a vested interest in a specific outcome that may favour one side over another.³¹⁵ For Zartman and Touval, power is the basis for this process. Power translates into leverage in the form of persuasion, extraction (producing a favorable outcome for each party); termination (the ability to withdraw from a negotiation); deprivation (the ability to affect a hurting stalemate by withholding resources from one side or shift them to another); and gratification (the ability to add resources to the outcome). They emphasize that interveners make as much of a calculation based on interest in deciding to mediate as is the case for adversarial parties when deciding to engage in war.³¹⁶

In sum, had ECOMOG's efforts to stabilize Liberia been carried out effectively from the beginning, even with the loss of impartiality, there is little doubt the region would have been better off. Unfortunately, ECOMOG and its leading states lacked the experience, training and capability to carry out such an approach. For example, regional leaders were quick to notice that if they were to achieve their humanitarian objective of bringing peace to the war-torn country, they had to adjust their strategy to suit the situation on the ground. The ECOMOG offensive in Liberia succeeded in containing the

³¹⁴ Donald Rothchild and David A. Lake, "Containing Fear: The Management of Transnational Ethnic Conflict," in Donald Rothchild and David A. Lake, eds., *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion and Escalation*, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 203-226.

³¹⁵ William I. Zartman, and Saadia Touval, "International Mediation in the Post-Cold War Era," in Chester A. Crocker and Fen Osler Hampson, ed., *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996, pp. 445-461.

³¹⁶ Others who have argued in favor of a biased approach include Ruggie (1994) who suggests that outside forces should gradually escalate in order to dissuade, deny and deter an ascendant force - citing evidence from Bosnia he argues that the conflict would have ended more quickly had force been used decisively earlier on; Stedman (1997) who focuses on spoilers to process; Harvey (1998) who suggests that the use of force is appropriate when coupled with basic tenets of deterrence - when signals to use force are credible and the third party shows resolve and commitment; and Regan (1996) who uses game theoretic insights in which incentives/disincentives are used to alter the belligerents' expected utility namely that benefits accrued from using force.

conflict, at least for a short period, preventing the situation from degenerating into genocidal proportions like the type of all-out slaughter witnessed between April and July 1994 in Rwanda. The presence of a force of any nature in Rwanda would have at least prevented the all-out slaughter, even if in the long run it would not have succeeded in resolving the conflict. According to Howe, ECOMOG's overall strategy was for its conventional military force to intimidate the three factions while an interim government tried to resolve political differences and prepare Liberia for peaceful elections.³¹⁷

Without doubt, most of ECOWAS' strategies were problematic not only by their nature but also their timing. It was noted in chapter one that in conflict prevention, timing is very crucial. The effectiveness of third parties in preventing the escalation of violence is very much dependent on when they get involved in the conflict. If they get involved at the pre-crisis stage of the conflict, all things equal, they are likely to be effective and their task is likely to be less difficult than when they intervene at the escalation or peak of the conflict cycle.

As already discussed in chapter one, in conflict studies, timing revolves around the two twin concepts of ripeness and hurting stalemate. According to the theory of ripeness, a conflict becomes amenable to resolution when the moment is 'ripe' – when neither side can win a conflict and the cost of fighting is higher than the cost of seeking a solution. One problem associated with the ripeness theory is that it presupposes that, once a conflict begins, third parties have to remain inactive until war weariness sets in. Much as conflicts are amenable to resolution once parties become 'tired' of fighting, the same can also be said of the fact at the pre-violence stage of conflict when the various parties to a conflict have not yet hardened their positions and incurred huge costs. Thus, even at

³¹⁷ See Herbert Howe, "Lessons of Liberia" pp. 145-176.

the pre-violence stage of the conflict cycle, third parties can find opportune moments during which the time is 'ripe' for preventive action.

In the case of the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia, regional leaders were probably a bit too late because of the general expectation that the United States was going to get involved because of its historical ties with Liberia and because of the latter's strategic importance during most of the Cold War. In addition, sub-regional leaders were constrained because the Liberian situation was unprecedented and, in dealing with a sovereign state, they had to be careful lest they be accused of violating the sovereignty of Liberia. Eventually, they realized that the sovereignty argument was no longer sustainable and that they had to act.

The justification of Salim Ahmed Salim, the then secretary general of the OAU for ECOWAS' intervention is worth repeating here: "Africans are one people. It is hence unacceptable that a part of that people should stand in silence and in seeming helplessness when another part is suffering."³¹⁸ It is interesting to note that Salim's statement came at a time when the OAU still strictly adhered to one of its core founding principles – the fact that member states' borders are sacrosanct and anything taking place within those borders is an internal matter and should be treated as such. Analysts on Liberia, however, do not seem to agree with the OAU's assertion and the violation of one of its most important principles. George Klay Kieh, Jr., for example, has argued that ECOWAS' decision to intervene transcended primordial and humanitarian concerns. He contends that the Liberian conflict directly affected ECOWAS member countries in two major ways. First, and as indicated already in this chapter, several of their citizens who were resident in Liberia were being killed while others were taken hostage; and second,

the member states were concerned that the Liberian civil war could have a domino effect on the rest of the region. This fear is based on the fact that the preponderant majority of the member states of ECOWAS are governed by repressive regimes.³¹⁹

To the extent that Kieh's arguments are sustainable, one could argue that, as in most interventions, ECOWAS leaders were driven by self-interest and not by a real desire to help a neighbor. If the argument is taken a step further, one could argue that there would not have been any intervention in Liberia if the interests of the countries in the sub-regions were not threatened. This therefore probably explains why ECOWAS was late to act, even in the face of abundant signals that the situation in Liberia was deteriorating during the latter part of the Doe administration.

Below is a summary of the major events in ECOWAS' bid to stabilize Liberia.

Table 3.2: ECOMOG Intervention in Liberia/Outcome

ECOMOG Objective (s)	Event/Process	Outcome/Effect	Remarks
Separation of factions but without a cease-fire	Peacekeeping (August –mid-September 1990)	Resistance from NPFL; further instability	Objective not met
Push NPFL out of Monrovia and get it to the negotiating table	Peace Enforcement (mid-September 1990)	ECOMOG perceived as impartial; further instability; stalemate	Objective partially met
Get the various warring factions to negotiate and bring about a lasting peace	Series of Peace Processes – from Cotonou to Abuja (July 1993 – August 1995)	Limited compliance by the warring factions; fragile peace; poorly timed elections that had the potential to further divide the country	Temporary cessation of hostilities but no durable peace

³¹⁸ *West Africa*, Oct. 22-28, 1990, p. 2714

³¹⁹ George Klay Kieh, Jr., "The Obstacles to the Peaceful Resolution of the Liberian Civil Conflict," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 17, 1994, pp. 97-108,

II: Evaluation of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. There is a relationship between early warning and conflict prevention such that the earlier the warning, the better the outcome. More specifically, it is postulated that if early warning is to have a positive impact on the outcome of preventive efforts:

- H1a. there has to be effective indicators, methods, and information systems for identifying latent conflicts
- H1b. the information gathering system has to be well coordinated
- H1c. the strengths of the various information gatherers should be harnessed so that information could be gathered in the quickest way possible
- H1d. the information gathered has to be properly analyzed and packaged for policy makers

The ECOWAS intervention in Liberia was an ad hoc initiative. The organization got involved in managing sub-regional security - an issue that is traditionally beyond its purview - basically unprepared. Given that Liberia was its first attempt in multilateral diplomacy, the organization did not have a mechanism in place geared towards collecting early warning information based on which it could design preventive strategies.

In general, the hypothesis point to the fact that if early warning is to have an impact on the outcome of preventive efforts, there has to be effective indicators, methods, and information systems for identifying latent conflicts. The analysis provides support for this hypothesis because the absence of good information systems was part of the problem. In May 1990, when ECOWAS took on the Liberia challenge, the organization was responding to a crisis that was fast developing and most of its information was based on what was happening on the ground and the news coming out of Liberia; it was not based on any information gathering mechanism that ECOWAS had. In fact, it is clear from the ECOMOG intervention in Liberia that ECOWAS, like many regional and sub-regional organizations, does not yet have the capacity for effective information gathering.

The hypothesis also lays emphasis on coordination of the information gathering system for effective prevention. As already noted, at the time of its intervention in Liberia ECOWAS did not have any institutionalized mechanism for collecting early warning information. The fact that ECOWAS took on the Liberian challenge six months after the crisis began is an indication that there were no coordinated international effort underway to deal with the crisis. It was only the American government that was close enough to the situation to have gathered enough early warning information (Cohen piece). But as evident from the preceding discussions, the American government preferred not to get itself deeply involved in the crisis. The UN eventually got involved in Liberia, but in a subordinate capacity to ECOWAS. This meant that ECOWAS, even though ill-prepared to deal with the situation, was even better positioned than the UN.

All these arguments point to the fact that there was virtually no coordination of information gathering since it was a 'one-actor' show, an actor that was not fully up to the task. In general, evidence from the ECOWAS intervention seems to provide support for the hypothesis – the earlier the warning, the better the outcome.

Hypothesis 2. There is a relationship between timing and conflict prevention such that if conflict has to be prevented, third parties have to intervene at the pre-violence stage of conflict

The relationship between timing and conflict prevention has never been in doubt. The task of preventing conflicts is much easier in the early stages of the conflict cycle, at which time it is possible to alter the positions of belligerent parties. The ECOWAS intervention in Liberia came at a time when the conflict had moved beyond the pre-crisis stage – the ideal phase where preventive strategies can be effective. In August 1990,

when sub-regional leaders sent ECOMOG into Liberia for peacekeeping duties, they had already missed most of the opportunities for conflict prevention. They were too late in acting, probably because of the false hope that the problem was going to go away or, if not, at the minimum, the United States was going to get involved and deal with the crisis. Thus, when they finally got involved, there was already a major shift in power in Liberia. Taylor and his NPFL had taken control of most of Liberia and Taylor was indeed the de facto president at the time. He wielded more power than President Doe, whose control did not extend beyond the executive mansion. Doe was recognized only internationally – mainly by ECOWAS leaders.

This state of affairs emboldened Taylor to reject any effort by ECOWAS to find a political solution to the crisis. Even then, there were still limited opportunities for ECOWAS to prevent further escalation if it had chosen a strategy that was commensurate with the timing of its intervention.

In the end, ECOWAS' intervention beyond the pre-crisis stage of the conflict in Liberia made the search for a preventive solution difficult, thereby explaining the failure of the intervention in Liberia. This case study therefore provides support for the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3. There is a relationship between timing and strategy that affects outcome, such that:

- H3a. intervention at pre-violence stage with an economic and political strategy is likely to result in successful conflict prevention
- H3b. intervention at the pre-violence stage with a military strategy is likely to result in limited or short-term success but failure in the long run
- H3c. intervention beyond the pre-violence stage with political, economic and military strategies is likely to produce a failed outcome

Since the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia occurred beyond the pre-violence stage of the conflict cycle, the discussion here is limited only to hypothesis 3c. According to the hypothesis, intervention beyond the pre-violence stage with a mix of political, economic and military strategies is likely to produce a failed outcome.

Beyond the pre-violence stage, at a time of mounting intensity in the conflict level, the appropriate strategy is the use of force to stabilize the situation and then political diplomacy, mainly in the form of mediation, can follow. ECOWAS applied the wrong strategy – peacekeeping – to a fast deteriorating situation in August 1990. At the time ECOMOG forces landed in Monrovia, it was clear that there was no cease-fire on the ground. For that reason, there was no way they could engage in peacekeeping. Recognizing this basic fact and going into Liberia with firepower could have changed the dynamics and perhaps gotten immediate compliance from the NPFL. Instead, a whole three months was spent before ECOWAS realized it had the wrong strategy. That was enough time for the NPFL to strategize and position itself to deal with any ECOMOG offensive.

On the political and economic fronts, ECOWAS did not do a good job either since most of its attention was focused on the military aspect of the operation. In fact, there was some limited political maneuvering to get Taylor to the negotiating table but that was not successful because, right from the beginning, thinking that he was only days from the presidency, he vehemently objected to any form of intervention by ECOWAS.

Bad timing, coupled with the wrong choice of strategy, helped move the crisis into a stalemate and dragged it for almost seven years before Taylor became President through ‘democratic elections.’

Again, the case study provides support for the hypothesis and the general notion that intervening in civil wars beyond the pre-violence stage, even with the best of strategies, is likely to produce a failed outcome.

Hypothesis 4. There is a relationship between timing and strategy that affects outcome, such that:

H4a. mixed strategies are likely to produce a better outcome

H4b. single strategies are likely to produce a poor outcome

As outlined in chapter one, in general, third parties can use three strategies in dealing with a crisis - political, economic and military – and, most of the time, these are applied in tandem and not in isolation. The analysis of the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia indicates that there was the desire to use mixed strategies, as is clear from the ECOWAS peace plan.

When ECOWAS set out to implement its peace plan, however, the focus was solely military. It is difficult to tell if intense diplomatic negotiations could have prevented further escalation of the crisis because of Taylor's intransigence and determination to be President at all cost. However, a mix of diplomacy and force, right from the beginning, would have produced a better outcome than focusing mainly on pressuring him militarily at a time when he controlled most of Liberia.

This case provides only limited support for this hypothesis. This is because, at a later stage during the Liberian crisis, there were efforts from both the diplomatic, economic and military fronts with limited success. This was probably so because the timing was wrong.

Hypothesis 5. The chances for preventing conflict are better if there is a close collaboration between the UN/International community and regional, sub-regional and local organizations.

As indicated in the preceding discussions, it was the failure of the UN and the international community to tackle the Liberian crisis that led to the birth of ECOMOG. ECOWAS' diplomatic initiative in Liberia encountered problems right from the very beginning and, as a result, no appreciable progress was made in the search for peace. The very fact that Taylor vehemently opposed the ECOWAS initiative meant that the search for peace was going to be an unattainable task in Liberia. For one thing, Taylor felt that the ECOWAS leaders who were handing down instructions to him were no different from him. As well, the fact that he controlled about 90 per cent of Liberia at the time, made him feel that he had earned the right to rule Liberia. In 1993, the United Nations was consequently invited to join in the search for peace under the auspices of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). As Clement Adibe put it, 'the United Nations was invited to step into the Liberian quagmire because of the politico-military stalemate encountered by ECOWAS.'³²⁰ But the UN came in as a subordinate partner, poorly equipped and poorly funded. That complicated the search for peace in Liberia because there was very poor collaboration between the two bodies.

If, as was the case, UNOMIL was in Liberia to complement the efforts of ECOMOG; why couldn't the two bodies work together? It was probable that the late involvement of the United Nations in the crisis was largely responsible. When the Liberian crisis broke out, the United Nations and the international community was expected to act. Failing this, ECOMOG was deployed in Liberia and it was two years into the conflict before UNOMIL was deployed. For example, many ECOMOG soldiers resented the fact that

UNOMIL came at a time when they had already done the dirty job of shedding their blood for Liberians; arguing that UNOMIL arrived at time when peace was almost concluded and would thus share the glory with ECOMOG.

True, there was collaboration between the UN and ECOWAS, but because of the nature of the collaboration, it did not serve the course of peace in Liberia.

³²⁰ Adibe, "The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership", pp. 471-488.

III: Conclusions and Key Findings

Liberia, like Rwanda, is yet another clear case of failure in conflict prevention. Unlike Rwanda, the search for peace in Liberia was spearheaded by a regional organization – ECOWAS. It represented the first major intervention to be undertaken by an African regional organization.

While ECOWAS needs to be commended for taking the initiative to design an African solution to a developing crisis, Liberia also demonstrates the failure of intervention when both the timing and strategy are wrong. With little experience in multilateral diplomacy, ECOWAS thought the Liberian crisis was an easy task that could be accomplished once it had troops on the ground. As a result, initial diplomatic activities were very brief and did not take the threat that Charles Taylor posed to the peace process seriously. Eventually, ECOWAS found itself on a collision course with Taylor. This created a stalemate and dragged the conflict on for 7 years.

The key findings of the chapter include:

- In negotiating an end to civil war, the threat that rebels pose must be taken seriously. This is especially true if there is one rebel group that has an upper hand in the conflict. At the time of the ECOMOG intervention, Taylor was in control of most of Liberia. If he was not going to be given the chance to achieve an outright victory, his demands should have been taken seriously. This did not have to amount to condoning the atrocities he committed, but did require facing up to the real challenges that negotiators were confronted with at the time.
- Given that ECOWAS could not elicit compliance from Taylor, the clear initial strategy that was needed was the use of credible force to get Taylor to comply.

Instead, ECOMOG entered Liberia in August 1990 to do peacekeeping. Realities on the ground eventually forced ECOMOG to change its strategy to peace-enforcement. But in civil war situations, every single day comes with more complications, so once a strategy is wrong, it will always be wrong.

- The other important finding is that while regional organizations can play an important role in conflict prevention, they can only do so once they have the capacity, resources and appropriate professional standards. ECOMOG had shortcomings in all these areas.
- Collaboration between the UN and regional organizations is crucial for conflict prevention but when the UN appears ill-resourced and ill-equipped, its involvement rather complicates than helps the course of peace.

Like Rwanda, one clear lesson from the Liberian experience is the fact that local conflicts, if not prevented or properly contained, can have a profound regional repercussion. In the case of Liberia's effect on West Africa, it was not due to ethnic affinities as in Rwanda, but because of Taylor's quest for enrichment, as well as his desire to pay back the countries in the region that supported the ECOMOG intervention, particularly Sierra Leone. Over the years, Taylor succeeded in exporting instability to Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea Bissau and eventually Cote d'Ivoire. If Taylor had been contained in 1990, the West African sub-region would probably be still as peaceful as it was before the emergence of Taylor on the political scene in 1989.

Even after Taylor became President, Liberia continued to be plagued by instability until pressure/negotiations from West African leaders and the international community forced him into exile in Nigeria in August 2003. Gyude Bryant was subsequently sworn

in as interim head of state. His administration was backed by a heavy UN peacekeeping presence in Liberia charged with the difficult task of disarming former combatants. The international community continues to be engaged in Liberia. There is currently an interim Parliament and Parliamentary/Presidential elections are slated for with elections slated for October 2005. These elections, if free and fair, hold the key to bringing lasting peace to Liberia.

Chapter Four

CASE 3: LESOTHO

Introduction

Lesotho is one of two countries in Africa that are completely surrounded by another. Gambia is engulfed by Senegal as Lesotho is by South Africa. This geography, coupled with the political and economic might of South Africa, makes Lesotho very much dependent on its giant neighbor. Unlike its giant neighbor, Lesotho is landlocked with a comparatively weak economy and a political system that blends monarchy with parliamentary democracy.

Since Independence in 1966, Lesotho has had a very rough political history, leading up to the 1998 crisis and outside intervention. In May 1998, general elections were held in Lesotho amidst tension between the various political parties.³²¹ The elections led to further deterioration of an already bad situation. In the months following the elections, the country hit the headlines with repeated mutinies and the breakdown of law and order. The lawlessness, particularly in the capital, Maseru, raised fears of an imminent *coup d'etat*.

This chapter, like the previous ones, examines the Lesotho case using the theoretical framework discussed in chapter one. This case is different from the two preceding ones, however, because it represents one instance in Africa in which a regional organization was able to mount an intervention which had a positive impact on the developing crisis. The central argument of the chapter is that the timely intervention of the Southern

³²¹ The governing party was the Lesotho Congress Party (LCD) and the opposition parties were: the Basotho National Party (BNP), Basotholand Congress Party (BCP) and the Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP).

African Development Community (SADC) under the leadership of South Africa helped prevent the disintegration of the mountain kingdom.

For analytical purposes, SADC's intervention in Lesotho is divided into two phases, each representing a different intervention. The first phase examines the initiatives undertaken by the organization following the 1994 'royal coup'. Even though SADC's major intervention occurred four years later, the 1994 intervention is worth examining for two reasons. First, it was the first initiative by SADC, occurring at a time when the organization was trying to pay serious attention to the issue of security within member states; and, second, as a result of that intervention, SADC kept Lesotho on its radar screen and was able to move swiftly to prevent escalation during the 1998 crisis. It should be noted that the first phase is only included to give a background and put the discussion and analysis of the second phase in perspective. The second phase, which forms the core of this chapter, encompasses initiatives leading up to *Operation Boleas* – SADC's controversial but successful military intervention in Lesotho in September 1998.

The chapter consists of four parts. The first part documents the history of instability in Lesotho. The second part examines the first SADC intervention following the 1994 'royal coup.' The third part discusses the 1998 intervention. I argue that SADC and in fact South African interventions in Lesotho transcended primordial and humanitarian concerns – national interest, whether defined in narrow or broad terms, was key in the decision to intervene. And the final part is an analysis of the case using the variables discussed in chapter one as well as an evaluation of our hypotheses.

I: Analysis

Unlike the two previous cases, Lesotho represents an instance in which there was actual conflict prevention. What this means is that, to a large extent, theory mirrored reality. This section is devoted to examining why and how that was possible. Like the previous cases, the analysis will be done using the theoretical framework for this thesis. In a continent where there is a serious shortage of successful cases of conflict prevention, the analysis in this section will help in generating new knowledge about the best ways to prevent conflicts.

(a) Warning Signals

This section examines the signals of the Lesotho crisis. Like the previous chapters and for ease of comparison, the warning signals are divided into long-term structural factors, short-term policies and finally the triggers.

Table 4.1: Timelines of the Lesotho Crisis

Description	Time-line	Stage of Conflict
Elite behaviour as root cause of conflict	1966-1970	Pre-crisis
Interventions by the monarchy and the military	1970-1994	Pre-crisis
The royal coup and the 1998 Elections	1994-1998	Escalation

(i) History and the Structural Signals of Crisis in Lesotho

This section presents the history of Lesotho in conceptual terms. I examine history from the point of view of it constituting a warning sign of problems to come. History in Lesotho created the underlying structural conditions for conflict. This began as class

conflict manifested through elite behavior which became the hallmark of politics in Lesotho right from independence. This eventually brought the monarchy and the military in conflict with the ruling elite.

Elite Behavior and Conflict in Lesotho

Lesotho gained political Independence in 1966 and, ever since, it has been plagued with a series of political crises – mostly coups d’etat - that can be explained within the context of its location and the make up of its political system. In a pattern that was consistent with most African countries at independence, Lesotho had a one-party system. It was ruled by the Basotho National Party (BNP), under Chief Leabua Jonathan. The party, which had the support of the Roman Catholic Church as well as the colonial administration, won the pre-independence election of 1965.³²² The BNP ruled Lesotho until the first post-independence elections were held in 1970. What happened in 1970 was to set the stage for a behavior pattern that would emerge among political elites in Lesotho – the losing party always contests election results and this always generates controversy.

Ntsu Mokhehle and his Basotholand Congress Party (BCP) allegedly won the 1970 elections. Instead of conceding defeat, the BNP, backed by Pretoria, annulled the results of the elections, citing opposition intimidation of its supporters as the key reason.³²³ According to one account, on January 31, 1970, Chief Jonathan of the BNP made the

³²² See, for example, Roger Southall, “Is Lesotho South Africa’s Tenth Province?” in Kato Lambrechts, ed., *Crisis in Lesotho: The Challenge of Managing Conflict in Southern Africa*, FGD African Dialogue Series No. 2, Braamfontein: Foundation for Global Dialogue, 1999, p. 23.

³²³ Ibid.

following declaration: "I have seized power. I am not ashamed of it."³²⁴ This declaration amounted to a coup d'état, which had the blessing and support of South Africa but which created problems for Chief Jonathan at home. The immediate problem that confronted the BNP government was that of resistance from the opposition. The government moved to eliminate all forms of resistance by detaining and restricting major opposition leaders, thereby inhibiting any well-organized defiance.³²⁵ The years of repression that followed sent many opposition leaders fleeing into exile. This move stifled the opposition and enabled the BNP to maintain a stronghold on the state; it subsequently became the only party in Lesotho.³²⁶ The implication of such an authoritarian move was that it created more resentment on the part of the opposition, with serious consequences for peace and stability.

The second problem that the BNP government had to contend with following the 1970 coup d'état was the decision of Lesotho's former colonial power, Britain, to withhold diplomatic recognition of, as well aid to, the new regime in Maseru. At the time, Lesotho relied on outside assistance for half of its recurrent and its entire capital budget. Recognizing that this decision by Britain, which was to be followed by other donors, was bound to have drastic consequences on Lesotho, Chief Jonathan entered into negotiations with opposition parties to create an all-inclusive government in a bid to confer an aura of

³²⁴ Colin Legum, ed., *Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Document 1970-71*, London: Rex Collings, 1971, p. B480, cited in John E. Bardill and James H. Cobbe, eds., *Lesotho: Dilemmas of Dependence in Southern Africa*, Boulder: Westview, 1985, p. 131.

³²⁵ Bardill and Cobbe, *Lesotho*, *ibid.*

³²⁶ Tsoeu Petlane, "The 1993 election, the armed forces and prospects for democracy in Lesotho," in Roger Southall and Tsoeu Petlane, eds., *Democratisation and demilitarization in Lesotho: the general election of 1993 and its aftermath*, Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 1995, p. 140.

legitimacy on his government. Britain eventually restored aid and recognition in June 1970.³²⁷

It is interesting to note that, even though the BNP government of the post-1970 elections succeeded in silencing opposition both at home and abroad, the government held only a tenuous grip on power since the majority of the population in Lesotho supported the opposition had voted against the BNP in the 1970 elections. By the mid-1970s it was clear in Lesotho that the BNP was relying on coercive measures to maintain its hold on power. This was the first “faux pas” of the BNP, which created a deep mistrust in Lesotho politics, a mistrust upon which future conflicts were based.

(ii) Medium Term Signals: The Monarchy and the Military in Lesotho

There are two important issues that are very important in any understanding of the crisis in Lesotho, the role of the military and of the monarchy in politics. The BNP government of the day acted in a way that gave the military a very active role in politics, while at the same time alienating the monarchy. Probably because of the way these two institutions were treated in post-Independence Lesotho, they became deeply involved in politics to the extent that their actions tended to derail any attempts at democratization. I now turn to these two institutions and how they influenced politics and crisis in Lesotho.

The modern state of Lesotho emerged after the Lifaqane wars – the wars which accompanied the rise of the Zulu Kingdom in the first two decades of the 19th century in Southern Africa. According to one analyst, these wars created the conditions which enabled the *Moketeli*, a junior lineage of the *Koena*, to establish control over what was to

³²⁷ Bardill and Cobbe, *Lesotho*, pp. 131-133.

become Lesotho and assume the position of a ruling lineage under King Moshoeshoe I.³²⁸ Moshoeshoe fought against Zulu invasions and united his people. By 1831, most of the Basotho recognized Moshoeshoe as their paramount chief. Lesotho was ethnically homogeneous, with a common language, customs, traditions and allegiance to one King – Moshoeshoe.³²⁹ If ethnic and religious divisions are sources of conflict, then Lesotho should have been a very peaceful country. But, as in Somalia, it is evident that homogeneity is no guarantee for peace.

The monarchy ruled Lesotho until it was annexed and colonized by Britain in 1868. Under a policy of indirect rule, a policy used by the British colonial administration in most of its colonies, the British made use of the tribal authorities in Lesotho, giving them limited powers in administration of the territory.³³⁰

In the early 1960s, during the negotiations for independence, a rift emerged between the then King Moshoeshoe II and the Prime Minister, Chief Jonathan, whose party came to power following the 1965 elections. Even though Chief Jonathan came to power through an election, he also had royal blood in him – he was a great-grandson of King Moshoeshoe I, and second cousin to Moshoeshoe II.

Personal interest and the quest for power brought Chief Jonathan face to face with his relative, the King. In the years leading to independence, when Lesotho was negotiating with Britain, the King and the Prime Minister had divergent view-points. While the Prime Minister favored a Westminster-type constitution, which among other things would limit, if not completely eliminate the role of the monarchy, the King, backed by

³²⁸ Rok Ajulu, "A historical background to Lesotho's election of 1993," in Roger Southall and Tsoeu Petlane, eds., *Democratisation and demilitarization in Lesotho*, p. 5.

³²⁹ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970: An African Coup under the Microscope*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972, pp. 1-2.

opposition elements, rejected the draft constitution and demanded that he be given control of the army, the police, and internal and external affairs. The King argued that a Westminster-type constitution is not workable in Africa, where a different set of conditions exist. The King extended his argument to Lesotho, claiming that the majority of the Basotho people would not accept a system under which the King “remained only a constitutional monarch, this being in conflict with the traditions of the nation.”³³¹

These two differing contending positions generated problems between the monarchy and the constitutional government of Lesotho. These problems are dealt with extensively elsewhere (Van Wyk, 1967 and Khaketla, 1972), so there is no reason to repeat them here. Suffice it to say, however, that they created a permanent tension between the monarchy and the BNP ruling elites, especially because of the perception that most of the opposition parties supported the King against Chief Jonathan.

In the aftermath of the 1970 coup, as a result of the repressive policies pursued by the BNP government, the already tense relations with the King deteriorated further, leading the government to call for the abdication of the King. The latter was eventually persuaded to go into exile in the Netherlands in April 1970.³³²

Towards the end of 1970, and after negotiations with opposition parties to ward off the negative image it acquired for itself following the coup, the BNP government began to realize that a rapprochement with the monarchy and the return of the King from exile could improve its image. The government therefore negotiated for the King to return

³³⁰ See for example, A. J. Van Wyk, *Lesotho: A Political Study*, Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 1967, pp. 7-8.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³³² Bardill and Cobbe, *Lesotho*, p. 136.

home, which he did in December 1970.³³³ The King's return brought about a noticeable reduction of tension in Lesotho. The Prime Minister took advantage of this new relationship with the monarchy to give chiefs considerable power, power that came with punishment when they misused it. According to Richard Weisfelder,

Skilfully wielding both carrot and stick, the Prime Minister permitted chiefs of all ranks to have considerable discretionary power in local affairs, and access to national policy-makers. But he has also sharply penalised chiefs whose performances were judged inappropriate because of malfeasance or political obstructionism. ...Even King Moshoeshoe II seems resigned to fulfilling his constricted ceremonial roles, rather than risking the continuity of his dynasty through further ineffectual challenges to the entrenched power-holders.³³⁴

Even though by the mid-1970s the BNP government had succeeded in bringing the monarchy under control, the latter has forever been politicized and will continue to play a key role in politics in Lesotho, especially with regards to the coups d'état which seem to be a persistent problem. Coups are usually carried out by the military but, in Lesotho, the monarchy is usually cited as a key player in what one analyst calls the 'monarchy-military' alliance.³³⁵ The military therefore is our next focus of attention, with special relevance for conflict and its resolution.

Since gaining political independence, the military has been front and centre in the politics of Lesotho. As I have noted earlier, it played a key role in ensuring that the post-1970 BNP government maintained a stronghold on the citizens of Lesotho, particularly the opposition parties. By making use of the military to stifle dissent and rein in the opposition, the BNP not only politicized the military, but it also made the military an instrument of undermining democracy in Lesotho. According to Samuel Huntington,

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Richard F. Weisfelder, "The Basotho Nation-State: What Legacy for the Future?", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 19, 2 (1981): 221-256, pp. 240-241.

“the most important causes of military intervention in politics are not military but political and reflect not the social and organizational characteristics of the military establishment but the political and institutional structure of society.”³³⁶ As is evident from the preceding discussion, the elite conflicts in Lesotho, coupled with the authoritarian policies of the BNP government, provided good political reasons for the military to intervene in politics. And the BNP’s use of the military for repression awakened the latter to the fact it could use its weapons to seek power, especially if it could justify it based on the political situation prevailing in the country.

As in many African countries, the military in Lesotho did not hesitate to use its weapons when the opportunity availed itself. In this, the Lesotho military was not alone. Indeed, on the continent in the first decade of Independence, coups were rampant in most newly independent countries. As Samuel Decalo has observed,

If during the 1960s the coup d’etat rapidly emerged as the most visible and recurrent characteristic of the African political experience, by the late 1970s quasi-permanent military rule had become the norm for much of the continent.³³⁷

The events in Lesotho in the early 1970s to the mid-1980s can best be understood if situated within the context of Decalo’s observation and the contagion effect of coups in Africa at the time. In the aftermath of Independence in much of Africa, military officers used social, economic and political problems facing their countries as excuses to take over power. In the case of Lesotho, given that the military was pulled into the center

³³⁵ Tsoeu Petlane, “The 1993 Elections, the armed forces and prospects for democracy in Lesotho” in Roger Southall and Tsoeu Petlane, eds., *Democratisation and demilitarization in Lesotho*, p. 142.

³³⁶ Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968, p. 194.

³³⁷ Samuel Decalo, *Coups & Army Rule in Africa: Motivations and Constraints*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 1.

of politics by the post-independent government, its meddling in politics is something that was not surprising.

Even though the military has been involved in Lesotho politics at almost every stage in the country's post-independent history, for the purpose of this discussion I will examine just two key events involving the military. These are the 1986 and the 1994 coups. These events are important because they awakened Lesotho's neighbors and the Southern African Development Community to the fact that, if stability were to be maintained in Lesotho, and in fact the southern African region as a whole, then coups would have to be averted.

Since coming to power in 1965, the BNP government had been supported by the Lesotho Paramilitary Force (LPF), headed by Major-General Justin Lekhanya. Its support was especially prominent when it backed the constitutional coup of 1970, which enabled the BNP to tighten its grip on power. The LPF also played a vital role in foiling an attempted coup in 1974, when elements of the opposition BCP attempted to overthrow the government.³³⁸ And, from 1979, the LPF has been the main line of defence against incursions by the armed wing of the BCP, the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA),³³⁹ which launched occasional guerrilla attacks from the BCP's sanctuary in South Africa.³⁴⁰

The cozy relationship between the military, which had virtually been co-opted into government, and the BNP started to deteriorate when divisions began to emerge within the BNP as regards its policy towards South Africa. It is a truism to say that Lesotho is

³³⁸ Roger Southall, "Lesotho's transition and the 1993 election" in Roger Southall and Tsoeu Petlane, eds., *Democratisation and demilitarization in Lesotho*, p. 19.

³³⁹ The Lesotho Liberation Army is supported by South Africa, according to some analysts. This probably was the reason why it had its base in that country. For this line of argument, see for example, I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 170-254,

³⁴⁰ Roger Southall, "Lesotho's transition and the 1993 election", p. 19.

more dependent on South Africa than vice versa. Gabriele Winai Strom, who has written extensively on Lesotho dependence on South Africa in *Development and Dependence in Lesotho, the Enclave of South Africa*, argues that “The extremeness of dependence in Lesotho makes it a test case for generalizations about tendencies treated in the theoretical literature on underdevelopment as signs of dependence.”³⁴¹ In peace-times, Lesotho’s dependence on South Africa, and the political influence emerging therefrom, is frequently seen as interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign country. In times of conflict, however, dependence on South Africa has benefits beyond the usual economic ones. One could argue that, in fact, this dependence is one of the key factors responsible for the leadership taken by South Africa in preventing conflict escalation in Lesotho.

It is interesting to note that, since attaining independence, the relationship between Lesotho and its giant neighbor has been largely defined this asymmetrical relationship. This long-held and unchallenged relationship began to change when, in the early 1980s, a right-wing faction emerged within the BNP. This group was largely made up of highly educated young men, who were less materially ambitious than the ‘old-guard’. They began questioning the rationale of the dependent and ‘non-antagonistic’ relation with South Africa.³⁴² This division began to eat into the ranks of the party, to the extent that the radicals made a lot of progress, much to the dislike of the leading elements in the army, notably the head of the LPF, Major-General Lekhanya.³⁴³ In 1983, elections were organized in Lesotho, and like all elections before and after, very serious problems were to follow. After what was perceived as a complete shift in power toward the radical

³⁴¹ Gabriele Winai Strom, *Development and Dependence in Lesotho, the Enclave of South Africa*, Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1978, p. 12.

³⁴² Roger Southall, “Lesotho’s transition and the 1993 election”, p. 19.

³⁴³ Ibid.

group, the military took up arms and, on January 20, 1986, the LPF staged a coup and overthrew the BNP government.

The new military government sought to legitimize itself by aligning itself with the King. In a six man Military Council formed following the coup, the King had two representatives, while the subordinate Council of Ministers was almost entirely made up of Royal supporters.³⁴⁴ This new rapprochement with the monarchy went further than just appointing the sympathizers of the monarchy. In fact, the King himself was given substantial powers. State, executive and legislative powers were transferred to the King, who was to act on the advice of the Military Council. Thus, the new government was virtually run by the King who coordinated closely with the coup maker – Justin Lekhanya.

The romance with the monarchy was short-lived. In February 1990, in yet another dramatic political twist, which saw the end of the era of dual power occasioned by the 1986 coup, the military stripped the King of all his executive and legislative powers and purged the Council of Ministers. In addition to being made powerless, the King was also exiled.³⁴⁵ Lekhanya also announced the establishment of a new body – the National Constituent Assembly - charged with producing a new constitution to prepare Lesotho for a return to constitutional rule by June 1992. Lekhanya was not able to carry through his transition. In 1991, an internal mutiny by junior army officers ousted him and left Phisoane Ramaema as Chairman of the Military Council.³⁴⁶ Meanwhile, because Moshoeshoe II had earlier on refused to return to Lesotho under new rules which left him

³⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

³⁴⁵ U. S. Department of Commerce - National Trade Data Bank, December 19, 2000.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

with only ceremonial powers, his son was installed as King Letsie III.³⁴⁷ These developments further dented the already rocky relationship between the ruling elite in Lesotho and the monarchy. The relationship was further worsened when, in 1993, under a new constitution, the King was left without any executive authority. Not only that, he was further proscribed from engaging in political affairs.

In the wake of a rising military dictatorship and the declining influence of the monarchy, a multiparty election was held on March 27, 1993. This election, the first in ten years, was dubbed by some analysts as remarkable with far-reaching domestic and regional significance.³⁴⁸ What was to follow the elections was a lot of resentment within the military, which was forced to give up power involuntarily. This, coupled with the fact that many monarchists were disgruntled with the treatment meted out to the King under the new constitution, was bound to spark another round of political instability. The election was generally accepted as free and fair. There were 65 parliamentary seats up for grabs and all went to the BCP, headed by Ntsu Mokhehle.³⁴⁹

Immediately on assuming the reins of power in Lesotho, the new BCP administration was confronted with serious problems within the military. Samuel Decalo once noted that, in general, the military in Africa is always resistant to pressures for democratisation since “to liberalise is to dig their own graves.”³⁵⁰ What happened in Lesotho was that the military dug its own grave by agreeing to the election but quickly realized that it needed to refuse being buried. It quickly bounced back and attempted to take control of the

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Roger Southall and Tsoeu Petlane, “Introduction” in Southall and Petlane, eds., *Democratisation and demilitarisation in Lesotho*, p. xi.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Samuel Decalo, “Back to Square One: The Re-Democratisation of Africa,” *Africa Insight*, 1991, 21:3, p. 157, cited in Khabele Matlosa, “The military after the election: Confronting the new democracy,” in Southall and Petlane, eds., *Democratisation and demilitarisation in Lesotho*, p. 119.

government. Factions soon emerged within the military, which started off fighting each other. Even though they did not fight the BCP government directly, this jockeying for control paralyzed the government and left the Prime Minister powerless.³⁵¹

This development ushered in a period of political instability, with the police and prison services following the lead of the army and engaging in mutinies. The relationship between the security forces and the newly elected civilian authorities deteriorated, rapidly creating a vacuum in the administration of the state. The King then made a move that is usually characteristic of the military – he took over power unconstitutionally. On August 17, 1994, King Letsie III, in collaboration with some elements of the army, staged a palace coup, unconstitutionally suspended Parliament, and installed an appointed Ruling Council.³⁵² This coup, dubbed the “royal coup”, marked a clear turning point in the history of the monarchy and brought in a new era in politics in Lesotho, with the monarchy once again engaged in politics at the highest level.

This development was condemned both domestically and regionally. Domestically, the people of Lesotho were tired of military coups – even though this was more royal than military, it was still a coup that had the backing of some elements of the military. After almost two decades of military rule, the people probably felt that democracy should be given a chance. This is especially so if the situation in Lesotho is placed within a regional and continental perspective – most countries were at the time experimenting with democracy. At the regional level, most countries, especially South Africa, were concerned that growing instability in Lesotho was bound to have a spill-over effect.

³⁵¹ For a detailed analysis of the conduct of the military after the 1993 elections, see Khabele Matlosa, “The military after the election,” pp. 118-140. See also Tsoeu Petlane, “The 1993 election, the armed forces and prospects for democracy in Lesotho,” in Southall and Petlane, eds., *Democratisation and demilitarisation in Lesotho*, pp. 140-158.

This royal coup was the culmination of years of instability in Lesotho. Regional leaders thought that the time was ripe to deal with the situation if they were to avert conflict then and in the future.

(iii) The Triggers: The 'Royal Coup' and the May 1998 Elections

In 1994, following the 'royal coup', SADC intervened and prevented the crisis from degenerating into an all-out conflict. King Letsie III gave democracy in Lesotho a chance once more, as a result of which Prime Minister Mokhehle was re-instated. The coup had a devastating effect on the Prime Minister's ability to lead – he was at the helm of affairs in Lesotho but things were never the same for him both in terms of his capacity to govern and of the leadership of his party, the BCP. As one analyst aptly put it, "ailing and aged, he lost control of the party machinery as potential successors wrestled for power."³⁵³ What was to follow was a form of faction-fighting within the party, a fight that was not based on any sound ideological and policy differences, but one simply based on the quest for power.³⁵⁴ This power struggle led to a split of the BCP, causing Mokhehle to form a new party, the Lesotho Congress of Democracy (LCD), on June 7, 1997. He therefore resigned from the BCP, took with him a majority of the country's elected members of parliament, retained office as a result, and declared the LCD the new ruling government.³⁵⁵ This added drama to the already complicated politics of Lesotho. The BCP, which was elected by a popular vote, was all of a sudden transformed into an

³⁵² See for example, Khabele Matlosa, "The military after the election: Confronting the new democracy," p. 118.

³⁵³ Roger Southall, "Is Lesotho South Africa's Tenth Province?", in Kato Lambrechts, ed., *Crisis in Lesotho*, p. 25.

³⁵⁴ See for example, Khabele Matlosa, "The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa: The Case of Lesotho," in Nana Poku, ed., *Security and Development in Southern Africa*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001, p. 92.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

opposition party. The party leadership resisted this development, which they considered “a coup d’etat by Mokhehle”³⁵⁶ reminiscent of the BNP coup of 1970.

As expected, this development almost paralyzed Lesotho, especially given its history of political instability. The BCP was now in league with its former opponents, the BNP and other political parties, against the LCD. It was amidst this tension and drama that Lesotho headed once more to the polls on May 23, 1998 with four key contestants – the LCD, the BCP, the BNP and the Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP). According to one analyst, as the polls drew closer and closer, the key question on the minds of most observers was extent to which Mokhehle would be able to wrestle popular support from the BCP, with most predicting a tight contest between the three major parties – the BNP, BCP, and MFP.³⁵⁷

When the Basotho people went to the polls on May 23, the unexpected happened. The LCD won 60 per cent of the vote and all but one seat in the 80-seat parliament. The following table gives a breakdown of the results.

Table 4.2: The 1998 General Election for the National Assembly

Contestants	No. of Votes	% of Votes	Seats Won
LCD	355,059	60.7	79
BNP	147,073	24.5	1
BCP	61,793	10.6	0
MFP	7,460	1.3	0
Other	16,244	2.9	0
Total	594,740	100.0	80

Source: Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), Provisional Results, 27 May 1998.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., and Roger Southall, “Is Lesotho South Africa’s Tenth Province?”, in Kato Lambrechts, p. 25.

³⁵⁸ Cited in Khabele Matlosa, “The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa” in Nana Poku, ed., *Security and Development in Southern Africa*, p. 93.

In a country where even elections held under ‘normal’ political conditions have always generated a lot of problems, the effect of such an unpredictable outcome on democracy in Lesotho was definitely going to be chaotic. In the words of Khabele Matlosa, “rather than deepen Lesotho’s democracy, the election added to the country’s old multivariate and unresolved conflicts among the political elite.”³⁵⁹ All the opposition parties rallied together to contest the election result, which they described as fraudulent, even after international observers concluded that, although there was some cheating by the LCD, it did not rise to a scale that could influence the outcome.³⁶⁰

The opposition parties adopted a two-pronged strategy: mounting a challenge in the law courts and organizing protest marches and demonstrations.³⁶¹ In addition to this strategy, they also appealed to both the King and the three countries of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe to intervene.³⁶² The King was called upon to “repeat his antics of mid-1994 by dismissing the government”³⁶³ while the troika were called upon to perform the “wonders” of timely intervention, as it did before. In the ensuing months, Lesotho descended into chaos, with persistent opposition riots. The worst came when the army mutinied, together with some young members of the BNP. According to one report, “the BNP used its connections with the military to gather arms for its youth league, who soon roamed the country in armed bands.”³⁶⁴

It would be naïve to argue that the May 1998 elections was the source of the 1998 crisis in Lesotho. Instead, the events following the elections were only a trigger to the

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ See for example, “Lesotho: Sad aftermath,” *The Economist*, 10 October 1998, p.51.

³⁶¹ Khabele Matlosa, “The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa” in Nana Poku, ed., *Security and Development in Southern Africa*, p. 94.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Roger Southall, “Is Lesotho South Africa’s Tenth Province?”, in Kato Lambrechts, p. 25.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

already existing structural factors which pre-disposed Lesotho to conflict. Khabele Matlosa did not miss to point out the real cause of the conflict in Lesotho when he noted that:

Historically, Lesotho's political institutions have shown immense incapacity to ensure legitimacy of governing regimes and sustain the country's sovereignty and security. This has been made worse by the country's age-old structural crisis marked in the main by (1) the weak economic base, (2) its landlocked situation, and (3) external dependence.³⁶⁵

Thus, by the summer of 1998, the burden of history had began to weigh heavily on Lesotho, with the latent conflict now threatening to get out of control. In order to bring the situation under control, there were local initiatives by civil society groups aimed at bringing the different factions to the negotiating table. The initiatives led to the establishment of the Lesotho Crisis Committee, a mediation structure made up of the Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Lesotho Council of Non-government Organizations (LCN), Lesotho Network for Conflict Management (LNCM) and the Lesotho Youth Federation.³⁶⁶ The Crisis Committee failed to find a negotiated settlement mainly because the ruling party did not give it the free rein to operate, while, at the same time, the opposition parties viewed it with some suspicion.³⁶⁷ With the failure of track-two diplomacy, the spotlight shifted to track-one diplomacy, with South Africa at the forefront. By this time, all the telltale signs of an impending conflict were clear (the table below summarizes the warning signs). These warning signs led South Africa and SADC to make a decisive and early move to prevent the conflict from moving beyond the pre-crisis stage.

³⁶⁵ Matlosa, "The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa", p. 94.

³⁶⁶ Ibid. and Khabele Matlosa, "The Lesotho Conflict: Major Causes and Management," in Kato Lambrechts, p. 9.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

Box 4.1: Summary of Warning Signals - Lesotho

- The politicization of the monarchy and the military
- History of coups
- History of contested elections

An important component of prevention is early warning and the timing of the response that follows the warning signals. As noted earlier, many analysts are of the view that while there might be disagreement on the scope of preventive diplomacy and the strategies to be employed, there is no disagreement on the importance of obtaining early warning information. But much as early warning is important, it is not an end in itself. It is important only so long as it is followed by early and appropriate action.

The case of Lesotho demonstrates how neighbouring countries can quickly react to a deteriorating situation in their backyard. In fact, unlike most conflicts in Africa, where there is the general expectation that the international community, particularly the United Nations and the United States, will act when a crisis develops, in the case of Lesotho the leaders of SADC almost single-handedly dealt with the political crisis until a solution was found. This kind of behavior from African leaders is probably part of an emerging norm whereby Africans are increasingly coming to the realization that they have to design local solutions to their problems.

SADC got actively involved in Lesotho in 1994, after the organization responded to warning signals from the mountain kingdom over the deteriorating political situation following the 1993 elections and the 1994 'royal coup.' One could argue that in 1994,

following the SADC workshop on Democracy, Peace and Security in Windhoek, Namibia, when SADC embarked on a course towards formal involvement in peace and security issues, SADC was responding to the situation in Lesotho. SADC eventually created its Organ for Politics, Defence and Security, the aim of which was to allow for more flexibility and a timely response at the highest level to potentially explosive situations. What regional leaders intend to achieve with this Organ was to be able to not only anticipate, but also to be able to act, in a proactive manner whenever there was a crisis.

Even before the Organ was formally endorsed by SADC leaders, a three member committee comprising Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe decided to act. Aware of the recent history of Lesotho – political instability following elections, frequent coups resulting from tensions between the military and the ruling elite, and also tension between the monarchy and the ruling elite – these SADC countries decided to act swiftly instead of waiting until the Organ finally became. As noted earlier, the mandate of the troika was to find a peaceful solution to the dispute arising from the ‘royal coup’ – a coup that signalled the possibility of worse things to come.

The troika was able to find a way out of the ‘royal coup’ when the King agreed to give democracy a chance, but with certain concessions that addressed some of the issues at the root of the worsening monarchy-elite relationship. With this breakthrough, Lesotho remained on SADC’s (especially South Africa’s) radar screen.

It is interesting to note that within a span of 4 years, SADC undertook a second intervention in Lesotho. In 1998, just a few years after SADC’s diplomatic intervention to avert conflict in Lesotho, the organization was back again, dealing with a situation that

was quite similar to the 1994 crisis. Like 1994, the 1998 crisis started when the outcome of elections, held in May 1998, was rejected by the opposition. When local initiatives under the umbrella of the Lesotho Crisis Committee failed to bring an end to the dispute, which was escalating by the day, the Prime Minister officially invited the troika countries, as representatives of SADC, to get involved to find a peaceful political solution to the crisis.

SADC once again took on the challenge to avert escalation. One of the key preventive initiatives taken by SADC was the establishment of the Langa Commission, which was supposed to investigate claims by the opposition that the May 1998 elections were totally flawed. The work of the Langa Commission proceeded alongside diplomatic moves by South Africa in particular. When the Commission's report failed to resolve the crisis, and with all other avenues for political negotiations exhausted, SADC took yet another preventive initiative. Unlike the 1994 crisis, this time around SADC preventively deployed troops in Lesotho to prevent the crisis from deteriorating further. SADC's military action was shrouded in a lot of controversy, yet it succeeded in stabilizing the situation inside Lesotho. SADC's 1994 and 1998 interventions form the subject of the following sections.

(b) Strategies

(i) The 1994 SADC Intervention

Since independence, politics in Lesotho have been characterized by continuing struggles among three key actors – the military, the monarchy and political parties - within the context of over-dependence on South Africa.

Much as Lesotho is over-dependent on South Africa, the latter has also had a lot of interest in what takes place in Lesotho, both during and after the apartheid government. During the apartheid era, Lesotho served as one of the key bases for the opposition African National Congress (ANC), which was fighting the government in Pretoria. In the post-apartheid era, emerging from several decades of minority rule, conflict prevention and the preservation of democracy became the cornerstone of the regional policy of the new South Africa. In 1994, Lesotho became the testing ground for the implementation of this new policy.

South African Foreign Policy and Conflict Prevention in Lesotho

From a security perspective, it is possible to argue that the ANC government in South Africa had Lesotho very much in mind when it was formulating its foreign policy in 1993. In addition, one could argue that, if the implementation of the new policy succeeded in Lesotho, then the new South Africa could implement it throughout the entire southern African region. South Africa had struggled for many years under apartheid; as a result, it was keen to ensure that democracy thrived not only within its borders, but in the entire region. From a conflict prevention perspective, especially one that envisages a leading role for regional organizations and leading African countries like South Africa and Nigeria, the significance of such a development in South Africa is that good governance and democracy in countries in like it can lead to the emergence of a norm of intolerance of any event that is likely to disturb democratic development and trigger conflict in Africa.

I argue in this section that Lesotho benefited immensely from the new policy, during both the 1994 ‘royal coup’ and the 1998 crisis, which triggered *Operation Boleas*. According to South African Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo, the vision behind the new foreign policy is “the attainment of a state of peace and prosperity which would allow South Africa to outgrow its designation as a developing country.”³⁶⁸ The seven principles of the new foreign policy include:

1. A belief in and preoccupation with human rights;
2. A belief in the promotion of democracy world-wide;
3. A belief that justice and international law should guide relations between nations;
4. A belief that international peace is the goal to which all nations should strive;
5. A belief that South Africa’s foreign policy should reflect the interests of Africa;
6. A belief that South Africa’s economic development depends on growing regional and international economic cooperation; and
7. A belief that South Africa’s foreign relations must mirror a deep commitment to the consolidation of its democracy.³⁶⁹

Reflecting its commitment to implementing the new foreign policy against the backdrop of its own history, post-apartheid South Africa got actively involved in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) even though it wasn’t yet officially a member.³⁷⁰ Simply put, the new South Africa was keen to assert its leadership role in Southern Africa.

³⁶⁸ Anthoni van Nieuwkerk, “The Lesotho Crisis: Implications for South African Foreign Policy,” in Kato Lambrechts, ed., *Crisis in Lesotho*, p. 16.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ South Africa officially became a member of SADC in 1994.

In July 1994, SADC held a workshop on “Democracy, Peace and Security” in Windhoek, Namibia, the purpose of which was to set the regional grouping on a course towards formal involvement in security co-ordination, conflict mediation, and even military co-operation.³⁷¹ This initiative was further strengthened when the Front-Line States (FLS)³⁷² decided to dissolve and “become the political and security wing of SADC.”³⁷³ At the Windhoek workshop, the working groups on conflict resolution put forward two key proposals. First, they recommended Conflict Resolution and Political Co-operation become a ‘Sector’, the responsibility for which would be allocated to a SADC member state. Second, they also proposed drawing up a Protocol on Peace, Security and Conflict Resolution.³⁷⁴ These proposals were fine-tuned at the next meeting in Gaborone, Botswana, during which delicate issues that were likely to intrude into the sovereignty of member states were abandoned. As well, the meeting decided to establish a ‘wing’ instead of a ‘sector’ for Conflict Mediation and Prevention.³⁷⁵ Clearly, all these developments reflected the new South African foreign policy and had the prospect of not only strengthening democracy in the region but preventing conflict.

It was within the above framework that a ‘troika’ task force - Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe - was formed. The mandate of the task force was to find a peaceful solution to the dispute arising from the ‘Royal Coup’ – a coup that was not an isolated

³⁷¹ Mark Malan, “SADC and Sub-Regional Security: Unde Venis et Quo Vadis?”, *Monograph 19, Institute of Security Studies*, February 1998, p. 9.

³⁷² The Front-Line States (FLS) was formed in the early 1970s by Tanzania and Zambia to lobby for the liberation of Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. As other countries in the region became independent, the membership grew and the organization became an organ for interstate security co-operation in Southern Africa. See for example, *ibid.*, for a historical account of the FLS.

³⁷³ Malan, “SADC and Sub-Regional Security” p. 9.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

event, but part of a continuing political problem. The following is a summary of the early warning signals before the 1994 crisis:

- History of political instability following elections;
- History of coups – 1970, 1986, and 1994;
- Tension between the Monarchy and ruling elite leading to the King's exile in 1970 and 1990 as well as his dethronement in 1990.

Given what was happening in many African countries, including the genocide in Rwanda, the memory of which was still fresh in the minds of African policymakers, these warning signs in Lesotho attracted great attention from SADC, particularly South Africa. As noted earlier, at the time of the 1994 crisis in Lesotho, South Africa was not yet an official member of SADC, yet she played a prominent and in fact a leadership role in finding a political settlement to the crisis. Much as South Africa was interested in ensuring that there was peace in Lesotho, she was motivated mainly by self-interest. It was obvious that political instability in Lesotho would not only affect South Africa, but the entire Southern African region, especially if refugees started flowing into South Africa. In addition, even though security problems were common in the Southern African region, they mostly had to do with liberation struggles against minority White regimes; the problem in Lesotho was a first, in that it was “an internal crisis in a black-ruled state.”³⁷⁶

Setting in motion a process of resolving the crisis, two days after the “Royal Coup” the Presidents of the three countries, under the auspices of SADC, together with the then OAU Secretary General, Salim Ahmed Salim, met the key actors in the crisis - the King

³⁷⁶ Mafa Sejanamane, “Peace and Security in Southern Africa: The Lesotho Crisis and Regional Intervention”, in Ibbo Mandaza, ed., *Peace and Security in Southern Africa*, Harare: SAPES, 1996, p. 71.

and the Prime Minister - in Pretoria. Their message was that “the coup was unacceptable.”³⁷⁷ Even though the task force sought an agreed settlement, all its energies were targeted at the King, who in this case was the perpetrator of the coup. There was however a sharp difference in the attitude and approach of the leaders, especially Mandela and Mugabe. Whilst the former was diplomatic, Mugabe was ‘hawkish’ in his approach. In a strongly worded letter to the King threatening sanctions, President Mugabe noted:

I wish, on behalf of my colleagues and myself, to draw your Majesty’s attention to the need for the restoration of constitutionality in Lesotho within a seven-day period following the Pretoria meeting. As we explained to your Majesty, it clearly meant the reinstatement of the Government of Dr. Ntsu Mokhehle without reservations. It also meant the withdrawal of the unconstitutional orders and other measures that your Majesty enacted following your Majesty’s assumption of executive powers.

Your Majesty, we would be pleased if your response to our appeal could indicate a forward movement towards the establishment of a constitutional and legal order. The absence of such a forward movement would leave the region with no other alternative but to join the rest of the world in imposing economic sanctions. In the event of no progress being made, we would have no alternative but to consider the imposition of such specific measures as members of our region would agree upon.³⁷⁸

President’s Mugabe’s message to the King was clear and unambiguous. What was not clear was whether the task force was prepared to back rhetoric with action. In other words, were the leaders prepared to make good on their threat of sanctions and possible military action after the ultimatum had expired? As later events revealed, the seven-day ultimatum came and passed and the King was still at the helm of affairs in Lesotho.

The next strategy adopted by the task force was to send a delegation of ministers from the three countries to deliver a personal letter to the King, this time not one that was

³⁷⁷ See for example, Khabele Matlosa, “The military after the election: Confronting the new democracy,” in Roger Southall and Tsoeu Petlane, eds., *Democratisation and demilitarization in Lesotho*, p. 135. See also *Ibid.*

threatening sanctions, but a 'polite' enquiry as to when he intended to reinstate the government that he overthrew.³⁷⁹ Probably emboldened by the failure of the task force to make good on its threat, the King refused to budge and indicated to the ministers that he needed to consult with his advisers before he could make any decision.³⁸⁰ Following these developments, one could argue that there was a clear indication that the King was beginning to realize that the task force was, at best, ineffective.

With the threat of force failing to convince the King, the task force quickly changed its *modus operandi*. The new strategy was one that relied on diplomacy and 'carrots.' President Mandela was alleged to have sent a letter to King, the tone of which was completely different from the earlier hawkish letter sent by President Mugabe. In addition to the letter, President Mandela dispatched two diplomatic missions to try to convince the King. Bishop Desmond Tutu, a prominent South African, led the first mission. This was followed by another one led by the South African Director General of Foreign Affairs, L. H. Evans, the aim of which was to hammer out an agreement.³⁸¹

Even with Mandela's diplomatic maneuverings, King Letsie III refused to budge. After exhausting all non-military options, South Africa, which according to most analysts was reluctant to use force to resolve the crisis,³⁸² decided to use a show of force to seal an agreement.³⁸³ Even though South Africa was reluctant to use force, probably because of

³⁷⁸ Letter from President R. G. Mugabe to His Majesty Letsie III, dated 30 August 1994, cited in *ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² See for example, *ibid.*

³⁸³ Eric G. Berman and Katie E. Sams, *Peacekeeping in Africa: Capabilities and Culpabilities*, Geneva: UNIDIR, 2000, p. 174.

the implications that such a move might have on South African interests in Lesotho³⁸⁴, such a show would send a signal to the King that, this time around, whatever threat was coming from the leaders of the region was real. Thus, on September 9, 1994, three South African Impala jets performed a series of manoeuvres over Lesotho. At the same time, South African paratroopers staged a mass drop near the Lesotho border.³⁸⁵ According to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), the military activity, which it described as exercises, were designed to “stabilize certain aspects of its contingency planning” with respect to events unfolding in Lesotho.³⁸⁶ Brendan Seery has argued that “it was clear that the SANDF deployment was the stick to the carrots being proffered in diplomatic shuttling behind the scenes by South Africa and some of its neighbours.”³⁸⁷ The South African military activity went on for 3 days, ending on September 11, 1994; two days afterwards, the King agreed to restore Mokhehle’s government and to abdicate in favor of his father, Moshoeshoe II.³⁸⁸

According to most analysts, the South African diplomatic manoeuvring provided the King with an honourable exit strategy, but as we have seen, that exit was only made possible with credible military threats. This confirms one of the arguments I made earlier – sometimes, for diplomacy to be effective, it must be backed by the possibility of the use of force. The King did not simply agree to restore the government he overthrew, he also

³⁸⁴ According to Mafa Sejanamane, the bulk of what constitutes modern Lesotho is South African-owned. See Sejanamane, “Peace and Security in Southern Africa,” p. 75.

³⁸⁵ Berman and Sams, *Peacekeeping in Africa*, p. 174.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Brendan Seery, “Africa’s Reluctant New Policeman Twirls His Truncheon: The Lesotho Experience and South Africa’s Role in Peacekeeping,” in Mark Shaw and Jakkie Cilliers, eds., *South Africa and Peacekeeping in Africa (Volume I)*, Halfway House: Institute for Defence Policy, 1995, p. 93, cited in Berman and Sams, *Peacekeeping in Africa*, p. 174.

³⁸⁸ Brendan Seery, “Africa’s Reluctant New Policeman,” p. 87, in *ibid.*

bargained and made sure that some of his grievances were taken care of in the agreement that ended the crisis. Among other things, the King bargained and secured the following:

1. abolition of the commission of inquiry on the monarchy and the reinstatement of Moshoeshoe II;
2. immunities for himself and those who acted on his behalf in the period under discussion;
3. agreement on holding a National Forum and other constitutional guarantees for the civil service and the military.³⁸⁹

From the point of view of diplomatic negotiations, even though the King was 'forced' out, it was a 'win-win' outcome for both the King and the Dr. Ntsu Mokhehle.

The timely intervention of the task force set up under the auspices of SADC and the leadership of the newly elected South African President, Nelson Mandela, prevented the political crisis in Lesotho from degenerating into an all-out conflict. In fact, the intervention by the task force in the 1994 crisis in Lesotho can be considered as a successful model for pursuing sub-regional conflict resolution and stability on a continent riddled with conflicts.

Even as a good model, the effort of the "troika" had its own shortcomings. At best, the intervention effort can best be described as 'band-aid' diplomacy. Mandela and the task force only succeeded in 'scratching' the surface of the problem in Lesotho which, as is already evident from the preceding discussion, dated back at least to when the country attained Independence in the mid-1960s. To be sure, they failed to put in place a permanent framework to deal with the persistent problem of coups in Lesotho, as well as the tension that exists between the monarchy and the political elite. In addition, the task

force failed to give serious thought about how to 'professionalize' the armed forces in Lesotho, a force that had become very partisan in Lesotho politics. In fact, dealing properly with the monarchy and the army is very important if further crises are to be averted in Lesotho. As Nqosa Mahao has rightly observed:

Every time a faction of the political elite has lost an election in the past, it would claim that the election has been rigged and then call on the monarchy and the military, which would become immediate allies in its attempt to win what it could not in the election. This was the case in 1965, 1970, 1990, 1993 and 1998.³⁹⁰

A number of factors might have accounted for the region's inability at the time to find a permanent solution to the problem in Lesotho. The first reason might have been the fact that South Africa was going through a complete transformation, with the new ANC government in power in Pretoria after several decades of apartheid. As a result, she had her own numerous problems to contend with. The second was the fact that SADC had just incorporated peace and conflict issues into its broad agenda and Lesotho was the first conflict situation that the organization had to deal with.

One could argue that, because the problem in Lesotho was not comprehensively resolved, the entire Southern African region, particularly South Africa, has since 1994 kept a close eye on the situation in Lesotho. It is interesting to note that between 1994 and 1998, there was not a real crisis in Lesotho. At the same time however, the unresolved 1994 crisis lingered on. This factor played out to the advantage of preventive diplomacy and helped stop a bigger crisis in 1998. As a result, South Africa and SADC took a keen interest in the situation in Lesotho in the aftermath of the May 1998 elections and the political crisis that developed. Unlike the response to the 1994 crisis, which was

³⁸⁹ Mafa Sejanamane, "Peace and Security in Southern Africa, p. 79.

³⁹⁰ Nqosa Mahao, "Solving the Structural Political Crisis in Lesotho," in Kato Lambrechts, ed., *Crisis in Lesotho*, p. 21.

limited only to diplomacy, on this occasion SADC combined both diplomacy and military force to bring the situation under control. The various initiatives are examined below.

(ii) The 1998 Intervention

South African Diplomacy and the Langa Commission

By 1998, political turmoil had become an embedded feature of Lesotho's political landscape. As a result, Lesotho had come under constant watch by her neighbors, especially South Africa. It was against this background that South Africa quickly moved to prevent Lesotho's descent into disorder in the wake of escalating unrest and violence following the events of the 1998 elections.

On August 10, 1998, a high-powered South African delegation comprising Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo, and Defence Minister Joe Modise went to Lesotho to negotiate a diplomatic solution to the continuing crisis. The delegation met with the representatives of the government and three representatives of each of the three main opposition parties.³⁹¹ In order to find a solution that was acceptable to all parties and that addressed the immediate issue at stake (the outcome of the May 1998 elections), Thabo Mbeki persuaded the ruling party, the LCD, to accept an independent review of the election results.³⁹² From the point of view of diplomatic negotiations, this was a good move since the opposition parties strongly believed that the elections were heavily rigged. In fact, in the immediate aftermath of the elections, the opposition parties had commissioned two groups to verify the election results. The first

³⁹¹ Matlosa, "The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa", p. 94.

³⁹² Southall, "Is Lesotho South Africa's Tenth Province?", in Kato Lambrechts, p. 26.

group was a South African forensic investigation firm, which was charged with analyzing the voters' list. Their report pointed to irregularities in the voters' register. The second group was a team of people drawn from the opposition parties charged with auditing the election in selected constituencies. Their report also pointed to irregularities.³⁹³

Probably aware of these developments, Mbeki made a strategic move that would appease the opposition and at the same time be acceptable to the ruling government. Consequently, a formal agreement was reached between the parties to put in place a team of experts to investigate allegations of irregularities during the May 1998 elections. The product of the 'Mbeki initiative' was the establishment on August 14, 1998 of the Langa Commission – a tripartite commission of inquiry that was made up of representatives from the troika of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe and headed by judge Pius Langa, deputy president of the South African Constitutional Court – a person who carried a lot of credibility in the eyes of the parties.³⁹⁴

The Langa Commission immediately set to work with a mandate to investigate claims by the opposition parties that the LCD had rigged the election. According to most analysts, the Commission worked openly and smoothly and made a painstaking effort to discharge its duties in a professional manner, especially against the backdrop of the implications of its potential findings. The Commission took about three weeks to complete its work and offered its findings on September 9, 1998. The findings were not made public until September 17, a delay which was for political rather than technical reasons. The South African government, the key architect of the Commission, justified

³⁹³ Matlosa, "The Lesotho Conflict: Major Causes and Management," in *ibid.*, p. 10.

³⁹⁴ See for example Sehoai Santho, "Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Lesotho", in Kato Lambrechts, p. 14; and Matlosa, "The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa", p. 94.

the delay by arguing that there was a need to refer the draft Report to SADC leaders, who were meeting in Mauritius around that time.³⁹⁵

This delay, even though for political reasons, was a catastrophic mistake on the part of SADC, especially given the already tense situation in Lesotho. According to Matlosa, the most influential newspaper in South Africa, *The Mail and Guardian*, claimed at the time that it had hard evidence to the effect that the report was delayed so SADC heads of state could manipulate the findings.³⁹⁶ *Mail and Guardian* reporter, William Boot, in his piece “South Africa’s crippling arrogance”, of October 9, 1998, strongly argues that the leaders of SADC, particularly South Africa, decided to manipulate the findings in order to appease President Mugabe, who was very close to the LCD in Lesotho. According to Boot, “Lesotho, ...had been sacrificed to the SADC, and more specifically to the imperative of better relations between two of the organization’s key players, South Africa's President Nelson Mandela and Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe.” Boot notes that sections of the report which questioned the legitimacy of the LCD government and called for the annulment of the elections under an interim government of national unity were excised.³⁹⁷ Without doubt, these developments only helped in making an already bad situation worse. It led to the escalation of tensions, armed skirmishes, looting of businesses in Maseru and ultimately a mutiny in the armed forces.

The report was finally made public on September 17, 1998. Perhaps recognizing the delicate nature of the situation on the ground, the Commission couched the report in fine

³⁹⁵ See Roger Southall, “Is Lesotho South Africa’s Tenth Province?”, in Kato Lambrechts, p. 26 and Matlosa, “The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa”, p. 95.

³⁹⁶ Matlosa, “The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa”, p. 95.

³⁹⁷ See William Boot, “SA’s crippling arrogance,” *Mail and Guardian*, 9 October 1998, available at <<http://www.mg.co.za>>

diplomatic language, full of ambiguities and short on assigning blame. For instance, the Commission noted that:

We are unable to state that the invalidity of the elections has been conclusively established. We point out, however, that some of the apparent irregularities and discrepancies are sufficiently serious concerns. We cannot however postulate that the result does not reflect the will of the Lesotho electorate. We merely point out that the means for checking this has been compromised and created much room for doubt.³⁹⁸

It is understandable that the Commission did not want Lesotho to descend into chaos by clearly and openly upholding the results of the elections, which would have angered the opposition. At the same time, avoiding nullifying the results did not help the situation either. Matlosa concludes that, “the entire report was full of vague and inconclusive statements that ultimately were unable to give the electoral process a clean bill of health but at the same time, did not make a case for the opposition.”³⁹⁹

In fact, from the point of view conflict prevention, the Commission’s findings did more harm than good to politics in Lesotho. Within the context of regional politics, some may argue, and in fact rightly so, that SADC leaders were afraid to set a precedent in condemning an incumbent government in favor of the opposition, lest they one day be subjected to a similar standard should they find themselves in an election controversy. In the end, politics, and not the facts of the ground, were given more weight.

To be sure, the Commission was set up with a mandate to investigate alleged irregularities in the elections of May 1998 with the primary aim of de-escalating political tension in Lesotho. At the end of the process, one can argue that preventive diplomacy failed since, quite to the contrary, the manner in which the findings were handled rather accelerated Lesotho’s descent into anarchy.

³⁹⁸ Cited in Matlosa, “The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa”, p. 95.

According to Roger Southall, the Commission committed a big blunder when it failed to declare roundly that the election was not rigged, and that the opposition were simply not honourable losers, even if the LCD did not come across as democratic angels.⁴⁰⁰ The key question is, if SADC leaders had acted as Southall suggests, would that have made the situation any better? Either way, it was a tough call for SADC leaders. Probably they should have safeguarded their credibility by going strictly with the Commission's findings.

As could be expected, the opposition rejected the findings of the Commission, and instead sought a solution by force. Both the opposition parties and the government started criticizing one another and tried hard to woo the military establishment in their favor. Amidst this development, the troika opened another diplomatic channel for negotiations aimed at finding a settlement. The opposition and the government held talks under the leadership of South Africa's Minister of Safety and Security, Sydney Mufamadi.⁴⁰¹ Given that the troika, especially South Africa, had already demonstrated a bias in favor of the LCD government, and by so doing compromised its credibility as a negotiator, the talks did not achieve much. The atmosphere during the talks was hostile, with a deep sense of mistrust among the political elites, who saw the whole situation reduced to a zero-sum game. As each party strove for an outright victory, compromise was simply out of the question. This caused the security situation to deteriorate very

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Roger Southall, "Time to give Boot the boot," *Mail and Guardian*, 2-8 October 1998, available at <<http://www.mg.co.za>>

⁴⁰¹ Matlosa, "The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa", p. 95.

rapidly.⁴⁰² At this point, SADC had exhausted its diplomatic options leaving it with only one option – military force.

'Hard' Diplomacy - Operation Boleas

With all diplomatic options exhausted and against the background of mounting lawlessness in Lesotho, with the possibility of an imminent *coup d'état* by younger officers in the Lesotho Defense Force, the Prime Minister of Lesotho officially requested the countries of the troika - Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe - to intervene militarily to restore peace and order in the mountain Kingdom.⁴⁰³ Painting a graphic picture of an impending *coup* and civil war, the Prime Minister in his letter made a strong case for the administration's inability to rely on the security forces in Lesotho to enforce the law. Among other things, the letter noted that

The most serious tragedy is that the police, and in particular the army, are at best, spectators. The mutiny in the LDF [Lesotho Defence Force] is taking root. The brigadier who has been forced to be commander, has had to go into hiding because the mutineers have attempted forcing him to announce a coup. He has so far refused and fears for his life. In this instance, we have a coup on our hands.⁴⁰⁴

Obviously, around this time, the region itself was very concerned about the implication of the deteriorating situation in Lesotho. As I argued earlier in the introduction to this chapter, national interest and not real humanitarian concerns, was at the heart of the decision to intervene in Lesotho.

Without doubt, there was interest at the region at the time, not only in salvaging Lesotho, but also in safeguarding the interests of member countries of SADC, particularly

⁴⁰² Matlosa, "The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa", p. 95.

⁴⁰³ Rocky Williams, "From Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding? South African Policy and Practice in Peace Missions", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 7, 3, August 2000:84-104, p. 97.

⁴⁰⁴ Matlosa, "The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa", p. 96.

South Africa. This is especially true in the context of the earlier 1994 SADC intervention, during which the troika, and SADC in general, committed themselves to staying the course and ensuring that political conflict in Lesotho did not get out of control and escalate into violence.

These circumstances gave SADC a 'carte blanche' to do what it was already interested in doing. Using the request from the government of Lesotho as a legal weapon, the Acting President of South Africa, Chief Buthelezi, consulted with the governments of Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique, after which he issued two series of instructions to the South African government. First, Buthelezi noted that the South African National Defence Force should conduct all necessary contingency planning for a possible intervention in Lesotho; and second, permission should be granted for the Botswana Defence Force to enter South Africa with the necessary equipment for their participation in the operation.⁴⁰⁵ This arrangement was to pave the way for the establishment of a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF).⁴⁰⁶ As the composition of the CJTF shows, by all accounts, the force was essentially a South African force and, by implication, a South African intervention.

Operation Boleas, as it came to be known, was launched on September 22, 1998, almost six months after the crisis began. On that day, South Africa moved 600 soldiers

⁴⁰⁵ Rocky Williams, "From Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding?", p. 98.

⁴⁰⁶ According Rocky Williams, "the elements of the CJTF for South Africa included: Combined Task Force HO from 43 Mechanized Brigade in Ratel APC (24 personnel); Regimental HO from 1 Special Battalion (Armour) in Ratel APC (18 personnel); Mechanized Infantry Company from 1 South African Infantry Battalion in Ratel APCs (135 personnel); Motorized Infantry Company from 151 South African Infantry Battalion in SAMIL 20s (flatbed trucks) (135 personnel); Parachute Company from 44 Parachute Brigade on standby; Armoured Car Squadron from 1 Special Services Battalion (60 personnel); Mortar fire group from 1 South African Infantry Battalion (42); Pathfinder platoon from 44 Parachute Brigade on standby; Provost platoon; 2 Air Force Mobile air Operations teams; 6 Oryx helicopters; 2 Alouette helicopters; Medical Task Group. For Botswana, the elements included: Battalion HQ (15 personnel); Mechanized Infantry company from the BDF in APCs (130 personnel)." See *ibid*, p. 103.

across the border into Lesotho. The operation was supposed to be a SADC intervention, since the troika was acting under the auspices of the regional grouping, but was in fact reduced to a joint operation between South African and Botswana. But on the morning of September 22, it was only South African forces that moved in. The Botswana Defence Force (BDF) troops, numbering 200, did not arrive until the night of September 22. The mission of the force was "...to intervene militarily in Lesotho to prevent any further anarchy and to create a stable environment for the restoration of law and order." Among other things, the mandate of the force included locating and identifying any destabilising elements within Lesotho and disarming and containing them, with force if necessary. Specifically, the intervention had three objectives:

1. prevent a military coup;
2. disarm the mutineers; and
3. create a safe and stable environment so diplomatic initiatives could be used to find a peaceful solution to the political crisis.⁴⁰⁷

From the mission, mandate and the objectives of the intervention force, it is clear that the force was a peace-enforcement type of operation. For one thing, the force went in at the invitation of the ruling government in Lesotho, but without any concrete agreement on the ground between the belligerent factions. While both South Africa and Botswana, and in fact SADC in general, wanted to portray a sense of impartiality, they were faced with a situation that demanded some muscle flexing, which is not conducive to classic, impartial peacekeeping. While such an approach was sure to guarantee some form of

⁴⁰⁷ Cedric de Coning, "Lesotho Intervention: Implications for SADC. Military interventions, peacekeeping and the African Renaissance," *ACCORD Online Monograph*, at www.accord.org.za.

success for the intervention force, it had the potential of pitting the intervention force against some of the factions in the conflict.

Little wonder therefore that many in Lesotho saw the intervention force as an invasion mounted by South Africa. This is probably so, not only because of the approach adopted by the intervention force, but also because of the history of South Africa's "Big Brother" role in Lesotho over the years. The South African government, refuting the characterization of the force as an invasion force, insisted that the intervention was far from an invasion and was justified by the fact that it was at the request of the Prime Minister of Lesotho. In addition, South Africa noted that the intervention was a last resort decision reached by SADC after all other means of resolving the dispute had failed. And from a South African perspective, it was argued that South Africa intervened to protect its interests in Lesotho, such as the Katse Dam project.

Apart from these considerations, South Africa wanted to make two things clear. First was the fact that disruptions of democracy in the region would not be tolerated. Since the government in Lesotho was democratically elected, South Africa felt it had a duty to nurture democracy. Second, by responding forcefully to the situation in Lesotho, South Africa, in consonance with its commitment to development in the region, wanted to serve notice to ambitious elements in the military, not only in Lesotho, but also the entire region, that their illegal actions would always be met with force.

At the end of the mission, the intervention force successfully disarmed the destabilizing elements in Lesotho and created a stable environment for the parties to reach an agreement, which led to the establishment of a multiparty Interim Political Authority

(IPA) to oversee the government until fresh elections were held.⁴⁰⁸ From a military point of view, the intervention achieved all its objectives. The effect, therefore, was that Lesotho was spared the uncomfortable experience of going through a civil war and Southern Africa and the international community were saved the trouble of having to “clean up and reconstruct” Lesotho after the fact. For an operation that was a first for both post-apartheid South Africa and SADC, many analysts consider it a success story and a demonstration of South Africa’s commitment to push forward its vision of African Renaissance, a vision that has evolved into the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).

Despite the apparent success of this intervention, especially within the context of dwindling international support and the emerging norm of African regional and sub-regional organizations taking charge of security in their backyard, many commentators have been highly critical of the entire operation, especially South Africa’s dominant role. In spite of the fact that SADC leaders, and in fact South Africa, justified the intervention mainly on the grounds that the organization was invited by the legitimate government of Lesotho, analysts raise issues about the level of authorization, the mandate and the conduct of the operation.

Authorization

In general, analysts believe that an intervention force mounted by a regional or sub-regional organization has a political and military advantage over one mounted by the United Nations or the international community. First, a local force has the advantage of enjoying a high level of political acceptance among combatants. This acceptance derives from the fact that, because of the persistent lingering effects of colonialism, most

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

countries in the Third World, particularly Africa, are suspicious when the West mounts an intervention in their territories. Intervention forces from the West are often perceived as ‘invasion forces’ with a desire to re-colonize the country in which they are intervening. Second, and very important for military purposes, is the fact that a local intervention force has a deep understanding of the conflict country’s cultural and political history, as well its physical geography. The latter factor is particularly important in peacekeeping and enforcement operations.

Probably because of these advantages, Chapter VIII of the UN Charter clearly reserves a role for regional and sub-regional organizations to take the initiative and deal with conflicts in their backyard, though not without the approval of the Security Council since the latter is the only body that has the mandate to authorize an intervention. According to Article 51 of this Chapter, “the Security Council shall at all times be kept informed of activities undertaken or in contemplation under regional arrangements or by regional agencies for the maintenance of international peace and security.”⁴⁰⁹

Despite the fact that Operation Boleas achieved the objectives for which it was mounted, there were concerns about the legality of the force, mainly at the SADC level, but also at level of the UN. The decision to put the force in Lesotho was shrouded in so much secrecy that, at the time the force was on the ground in Lesotho in September 1998, “it was unclear who took the decision, when the decision was taken, where it was taken, and what the decision was.”⁴¹⁰ To be sure, decisions such as this one have to be taken either at the Summit level or by SADC’s Organ for Politics, Defence and Security. According to most analysts, neither the Summit nor the Organ were involved in the

⁴⁰⁹ UN Charter, 1945.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

decision to intervene in Lesotho, since the last Summit of the Organ in Mauritius had made no resolution to that effect.⁴¹¹ In addition, even if the decision was taken by SADC, it ought to have then been taken to the Security Council, probably via the OAU, for ratification and approval, as spelt out in Chapter VIII of the Charter. The Lesotho intervention failed to conform to this important international norm.⁴¹²

The intervention force went into Lesotho under the umbrella of SADC, but the secrecy and speed with which the force was put together made it unclear whether it had the full support and backing of the sub-regional organization. Since there was no meeting of SADC leaders immediately prior to the intervention and since, as noted earlier, the force was mainly South African (the Botswanan forces were only part of the operation to project a multinational image for the force) many theories emerged about the motive of the intervention force. Prominent among these was the suggestion that South Africa wanted to incorporate Lesotho into her territory so that she will have unchallenged access to the Highlands Water Scheme.⁴¹³ For those who put forward this line of thinking, the decision to intervene in Lesotho was motivated by national interest, pure and simple.

This intervention, and the legal issues surrounding it, are reminiscent of the 1990 ECOWAS intervention in Liberia, where Nigeria was the key architect and main contributor to the intervention force (see chapter three: Liberia). At the time, there were concerns about the authorization and motivation of the force. Many analysts argued that it was a Nigerian invasion force that was only interested in furthering Nigeria's interests in becoming the hegemon of West Africa. In the end, the question that most analysts

⁴¹¹ Matlosa, "The Dilemma of Security in Southern Africa", p. 97.

⁴¹² Ibid.

posed was, “what was the effect of the intervention?” Should regional leaders get embroiled in legalities at the expense of thousands of human lives that were being lost in Liberia? For Nigeria and other countries in the region, the situation was reduced to more of a responsibility to intervene. And for them, the sole purpose was to avert the loss of human lives. The implication of this kind of emerging norm is that, increasingly, African interventions are going to be dictated more by humanitarian concerns. If that is the case, African countries and regional organizations can play the role envisaged for them in this study – taking a proactive role and stopping crises before they move beyond the pre-crisis stage of the conflict cycle. At the UN, for instance, when a crisis emerges, sometimes legal rumblings about what is right or wrong take much of the time instead of quick deployment of troops to prevent a crisis from escalating.

As in the case of Nigeria, ECOWAS and Liberia (see Liberia chapter), the same can be said of South Africa, SADC and Lesotho. Both SADC and South Africa were painfully aware of what had happened in other parts of Africa, particularly in Rwanda, when intervention was too little and too late. This is especially true given the new political environment in South Africa and the desire of the post-apartheid government to demonstrate leadership in the Southern African region. How would history judge the new South African leadership if had sat and watched Lesotho descend into chaos? Saving innocent lives was more important than any political and legal arguments that were to be raised later, South African leaders would have thought.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

Mandate

Closely linked to the issue of authorization of the SADC operation in Lesotho is the issue of mandate. It goes without saying that, if there are doubts about who authorized the mission, so will there be problems with the mandate. No matter how clear and well couched the mandate is, provided it does not emanate from the proper authority and channels, it is bound to be problematic; moreso in this case where the mandate itself was very ambiguous

To recap, the mandate of the intervention force was to prevent a military coup and disarm mutineers as well create a safe and stable environment that would pave the way for diplomatic initiatives to find a peaceful solution to the political crisis. From the wording of the mandate, SADC was going into Lesotho to do two contradictory things: use force against those opposing the government, thereby exhibiting some level of partiality, and at the same time make room for diplomacy, which presumes impartiality. Thus SADC was partial and impartial at the same time.

By every standard, the mandate was fuzzy. The fuzziness may be explained by the delicate nature of the crisis and by the fact that the mission was not authorized with the full consent of all members of SADC or the consent of any international organization like the UN.

As a regional grouping, SADC, since its involvement in the 1994 crisis in Lesotho, has tried to project an image as a neutral arbiter in the country's political crisis. The organization and its lead country - South Africa - have always tried to tread a careful diplomatic line between the government of Lesotho and the opposition parties. The

fuzziness of the mandate of Operation Boleas has however compromised this neutrality by projecting an image of SADC intervening in defence of the government of Lesotho. To be sure, South Africa and SADC have claimed that the intervention was at the instance of the LCD government. Given the delicate nature of the Lesotho situation, the mission should have been executed such that no party to the conflict could feel the intervention force was against it. What the situation in Lesotho demonstrates is that it is practically difficult for an intervention force to be neutral in intra-state conflict situations. This has been proved time and again over the years in interventions involving both the United Nations and sub-regional organizations. Several decades of UN peacekeeping, for instance, have proven that, even in the best of situations, when the mandate is impractical, a mission is bound to fail. A force either goes in to do Chapter VI peacekeeping, in which case it is impartial, or it goes in to do Chapter VII peace-enforcement, in which case it takes sides in a bid to prevent the escalation of violence. Since the end of the Cold War, with the rise in the number of intra-state conflicts, it is becoming painfully evident to architects of intervention that it is difficult for a force to be neutral – any attempt at that is a recipe for failure.

Against this background, the intervention force in Lesotho, with a mandate to be partial and impartial at the same time, was definitely bound to encounter problems. From the way the force was constituted, and from its mandate, the intervention could succeed at best in stopping the violence. On the other hand, the approach adopted risked alienating the opposition elements so that they would distrust any diplomatic arbitration by SADC. Thus, it made a long-term peaceful settlement unlikely although it is also true that hope for a meaningful political settlement was pretty thin even before the operation began.

Composition of the Intervention Force

Conventional wisdom with regards to military intervention has it that local peacekeeping forces are generally more acceptable than Western peacekeepers in the country in which they intervene. While this is true, local forces sometimes reflect existing political tensions and problems in their regions. This sometimes works against the good intentions that neighbouring countries have in taking an initiative to stop the spread of violence in their backyard.

In general, smaller countries are always suspicious of the intentions of bigger countries, much in the same way that post-colonial countries are suspicious of Western-initiated interventions. As a result, for a local peacekeeping force to achieve its aim of stopping the spread of violence it needs to project an image of being an all-inclusive force – a force that is composed of both big and small countries in the region. The first time that a “real” intervention force was put together by Africans – ECOMOG – the credibility of the force was significantly compromised by the perception that it was a largely Nigerian-dominated force (see chapter 3).

From the composition of the Joint Task Force that undertook Operation Boleas, it was apparent that SADC did not learn any lessons from the experience of its counterpart in West Africa. As we noted earlier, even though the force was supposed to be a SADC force, with contingents from SADC countries, it was reduced to an operation by South Africa and Botswana. Even then, forces from Botswana arrived in Lesotho about twenty hours after troops from the South African Defence Force began the operation.

Thus, in a situation where a multinational force was supposed to engage in an operation, yet the first glimpse of troops that the citizens of Lesotho saw was troops from their dominant neighbour, there was definitely bound to be a perception of an ‘invasion’. It is important to note, however, that in civil war situations it is very difficult to elicit the consent of all the parties to a conflict regarding the nature and composition of an intervention force. Given this fact, and given that South Africa was keen to get the timing right, it took the leadership in deploying its troops.

While it is true that timing is very important in mounting an intervention, the composition of a force is also key in order to ensure success. As one analyst noted, “Although military planners probably thought that speed was of the essence, they did not understand that the multinational identity of the mission was as crucial as speed to the way in which the SADC Task Force would be perceived, and thus ultimately to the overall success of the mission.”⁴¹⁴ While it is true that South Africa probably has the capacity and capability to deploy troops at short notice more than any other country in Africa, it would have been important to South Africa to help its neighbors put together their troops and deploy at the same time in order to avoid the kind of problems that Nigeria faced in Liberia.

In every military intervention, there is the need for a lead nation around which the mission will revolve and which at same time will provide leadership and unity. The key however, is to balance such leadership against any perception of dominance. In providing leadership for the SADC intervention in Lesotho, South Africa was very ambitious, to the extent that she projected an image of a “one-country” show. And given

⁴¹⁴ Cedric de Coning, “Lesotho Intervention: Implications for SADC”

the history of her turbulent relationship with Lesotho, especially during the apartheid era, both the political elite in Lesotho and the general populace is always suspicious of her intentions. For one thing, the political elite did not want to project an image that suggested that Lesotho is managed and administered from Pretoria and not Maseru. And from the authorization, composition and mandate of Operation Boleas, it was obvious that, for a long time to come, South Africa would continue to call the shots in Lesotho, as if to suggest to the ruling elite that “now that we have rescued you from hell, we have to tell you what to do”.

All these facts and perceptions combined to make the SADC intervention in Lesotho difficult but, ultimately, successful. Thus, at the end of the operation, even with a questionable authorization, fuzzy mandate and a South African-dominated force, South Africa and SADC succeeded in bringing stability to a tiny country that had threatened to disturb the already politically troubled Southern Africa region. The two key elements of the settlement negotiated by SADC were holding fresh elections in 15 to 18 months and the establishment of an Interim Political Authority (IPA). This agreement was modeled on the South African transition body which was crafted after the end of apartheid.⁴¹⁵ Even if this framework did not address some of the root causes of the conflict - namely, the persistent tension between the military and the monarchy on one side and the ruling elite on the other - it put Lesotho back on the course of normal politics. What accounted for SADC’s success is both the timing of its intervention and its choice of strategies.

As noted in Chapter One, timing is very crucial in conflict prevention. Since the effectiveness of third parties in preventing the escalation of violence is very much

⁴¹⁵ See Khabela Matlosa, “The Lesotho Conflict: Major Causes and Management,” in Kato Lambrechts, ed., *Crisis in Lesotho*, p. 12.

dependent on when they get involved in the conflict. If they get involved at the pre-crisis stage of the conflict, all other things being equal, they are likely to be effective and their task is likely to be less difficult than if they intervene at the escalation or peak of the conflict cycle.

Timing generally revolves around the twin concepts of ripeness and hurting stalemate. According to the theory of ripeness, a conflict becomes amenable to resolution when the moment is 'ripe' – when neither side can win a conflict and the cost of fighting is higher than the cost of seeking a solution. As discussed in Chapter One, one of the problems associated with the ripeness theory is that it presupposes that once a conflict begins, third parties have to remain inactive until war weariness sets in. Much as conflicts are amenable to resolution once parties become "tired" of fighting, opportunities for resolution also exist at the pre-violence stage of conflict, when the various parties to a conflict have not yet hardened their positions and incurred huge costs. Thus, even at the pre-violence stage of the conflict cycle, third parties can find opportune moments during which the time is 'ripe' for preventive action.

Evidence from the SADC intervention bears out. If the argument that the conflict in Lesotho did not go beyond the pre-violence stage is true, then SADC was able to find an opportune moment in the Lesotho crisis to influence the position of the parties to reach a negotiated settlement, even if that was done through the use of force. SADC seized the opportunity when the 1998 crisis was still developing. Depending on how one defines the timing of SADC's intervention in Lesotho, one could argue that ever since 1994, when Lesotho first came under the organization's monitoring, SADC has remained engaged in Lesotho. It was therefore not difficult for it to confront the 1998 crisis in a

proactive manner. Critics might argue that, even while Lesotho was under SADC watch, the organization could not anticipate the 1998 crisis and prevent it without violence. Given developments in Lesotho, it is probably more accurate to say that SADC anticipated the crisis, but there was the need to respect sovereignty of Lesotho so it was reluctant to intervene too early. Even then, the organization got involved in finding a peaceful solution to the crisis when local initiatives failed. This was clearly because the risk of inaction was greater for SADC than the risk of inaction, since the crisis in Lesotho could destabilize the entire region and set an unhealthy precedent, for the military in other countries in the region.

Furthermore, SADC got their strategies right. In conflict prevention, once early warning is available and the timing is right, there has to be a choice of strategy to be used. As noted already, the literature generally points towards the use of “mixed strategies” since there cannot be a “one size fits all” preventive strategy. Since conflict is dynamic, so must be the strategy that is used to address it. The strategy used has to be commensurate with the intensity of the conflict.

Against this background, diplomatic strategies to prevent conflict usually proceed from ‘soft’ to ‘hard’ diplomacy. Third parties generally begin with initiatives that are geared towards bringing the contending parties to the table to find a political settlement acceptable to both. This is typical political preventive diplomacy and is supposed to be complemented by coercive diplomacy should it fail to achieve the desired results. Coercive diplomacy can either be economic or military. Economic coercion is when belligerents are threatened with sanctions, withdrawal of aid or other forms of economic punishment if they fail to comply or respect the terms of a negotiated political settlement.

Military coercion involves the threat of use of armed force either to elicit compliance from belligerents - peace enforcement - or to stand between the belligerents so as they respect the provisions of a settlement – peacekeeping.

The practice of diplomacy in the Lesotho crisis perfectly reflected general theory – start with ‘soft’ diplomacy and if it does not work, move to ‘hard’ diplomacy. Proceeding from ‘soft’ to ‘hard’ diplomacy, SADC’s initial reaction to the crisis was to get involved at the highest level to bring the belligerents to the table. The beginning of soft diplomacy saw a high-powered South African delegation arrive in Lesotho on August 10, 1998. Made up of the Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo, and Defence Minister Joe Modise, the delegation reflected the seriousness with which SADC and South Africa viewed the developing situation in Lesotho. In consonance with traditional diplomacy, the delegation met with the government and the opposition and persuaded the former to accept an independent review of the outcome of the May 1998 elections – the key sticking point in the dispute. The outcome of the “Mbeki initiative” was the formation of the Langa Commission in August 1998. When the Commission produced its report three weeks after it was established, the report was rejected by the opposition, a situation which led to the deepening of the crisis, with both sides making efforts to woo the military establishment. The Mbeki initiative was followed by yet another mediation, this time under the leadership of the South African security minister, Sydney Mufamadi.

Minister Mufamadi failed to get the opposition and the government to reach common ground on how to get out of the crisis. With two failed diplomatic initiatives behind it, SADC believed it had exhausted its soft diplomatic initiatives, especially since the

rapidly deteriorating security situation within Lesotho. SADC switched to ‘hard’ diplomacy when it received a request from the Prime Minister to get involved militarily to find a solution to the crisis.

The SADC military intervention in Lesotho, which was at the invitation of the government, was supposed to be a peace enforcement operation. But in order to project a semblance of neutrality, SADC “pretended” to be involved in a peacekeeping operation. However, the situation on the ground demanded some use of force, which was not conducive to classic peacekeeping. True, the intervention force succeeded in preventing the escalation of violence, but its approach not only drew fire from the opposition, many in Lesotho saw it as an invasion force. As I have discussed already, apart from problems related to its approach, the intervention force also had problems with the level of authorization and mandate. On balance, however, it achieved its objective of stabilizing the security situation inside Lesotho, thereby preventing the escalation of the crisis, which had been rapidly deteriorating when the second diplomatic talks broke down.

II: Evaluation of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. There is a relationship between early warning and conflict prevention such that the earlier the warning, the better the outcome. More specifically, it is postulated that if early warning is to have a positive impact on the outcome of preventive efforts:

- H1a. there has to be effective indicators, methods, and information systems for identifying latent conflicts
- H1b. the information gathering system has to be well coordinated
- H1c. the strengths of the various information gatherers should be harnessed so that information could be gathered in the quickest way possible
- H1d. the information gathered has to be properly analyzed and packaged for policy makers

SADC, which carried out the intervention in South Africa, like many regional and sub-regional organizations in Africa, does not have any institutionalized mechanism for

collecting and processing early warning information. Nonetheless, in 1994, SADC held a workshop on Democracy, Peace and Security, which could be interpreted indirectly to constitute a response to the signals coming out of Lesotho.

Even without any proper analysis of warning signals, given the history of coups in Lesotho, Southern African leaders quickly reacted to the deteriorating situation in their backyard. In general, there is always the expectation that the international community will intervene once a crisis begins to emerge in Africa. But SADC leaders have learnt lessons from other crisis situations in Africa. As a result, once it was clear that Lesotho was likely to be destabilized by the intervention of the military in politics, SADC decided to intervene.

The fact that they responded to a coup in 1994, but that did not stop another coup in 1998, strengthened their will to ensure that they got it right 1998. So, single-handedly, they acted on the key signals – coups - until a political solution was found. SADC was determined this time around to ensure that whatever settlement was reached was one that would stick. And as indicated earlier, SADC used a variety of tools, proceeding cautiously with diplomacy and then backing that with the threat and actual use of force.

The analysis provides partial support for the hypothesis: the earlier the warning, the better the outcome, but only with an appropriate and timely intervention.

Hypothesis 2. There is a relationship between timing and conflict prevention such that if conflict has been prevented, third parties have to intervene at the pre-violence stage of conflict

Evidence from the SADC intervention bears this out. If the argument that the conflict in Lesotho did not go beyond the pre-violence stage is true, then SADC was able to find an opportune time in the crisis to intervene. It was able to influence the parties to reach a

negotiated settlement, even if that was done with the use of force. SADC seized the opportunity when the 1998 crisis was still developing. Depending on how one defines the timing of SADC's intervention in Lesotho, one could argue that, ever since 1994 when Lesotho was first under the organization's monitoring, SADC has remained engaged in Lesotho. It was therefore not difficult for the organization to confront the 1998 crisis in a proactive manner.

Critics might argue that, even while Lesotho was under SADC watch, the organization could not anticipate the 1998 crisis and prevent it without violence. It is more accurate to say that SADC foresaw the crisis but had to move cautiously because it was dealing with a sovereign state. Even then, the organization got involved in finding a peaceful solution to the crisis when local initiatives failed. The most important, timely and pre-emptive engagements were the Langa Commission of 1998 and negotiations at very high levels. These diplomatic initiatives were followed by a military deployment. It was clear from SADC's approach that it did not want to leave a vacuum in its efforts in Lesotho, lest the crisis move beyond the pre-crisis stage. The importance of proceeding from diplomacy to the use of force is the recognition that timing is of essence in any intervention effort – if an opportune time is recognized by third parties and diplomacy cannot bring about settlement, there is sometimes the need to move beyond diplomacy in order to achieve the desired results.

The analysis in this case strongly supports this hypothesis. SADC intervened in Lesotho at the opportune time and managed to prevent the crisis from escalating.

Hypothesis 3. There is a relationship between timing and strategy that affects outcome, such that:

- H3a. intervention at pre-violence stage with economic and political strategy is likely to result in successful conflict prevention
- H3b. intervention at the pre-violence stage with a military strategy is likely to result in limited or short-term success but failure in the long run
- H3c. intervention beyond the pre-violence stage with political, economic and military strategies is likely to produce a failed outcome

Since SADC's intervention in Lesotho was at the pre-violence stage, the discussion here is limited to H3a and H3b. SADC reacted early enough to the warning signals coming out of Lesotho and the timing of its intervention was also opportune. SADC's choice of strategy was also right.

The intervention strategy was mainly political. SADC began with "soft diplomacy" at the highest level to bring the belligerents to the table. The beginning of soft diplomacy saw a high-powered South African delegation arrive in Lesotho on August 10, 1998. The delegation reflected the seriousness with which SADC and South Africa viewed the developing situation in Lesotho. The Langa Commission was set up to help put Lesotho on the course to peace. Despite these efforts, diplomacy did not seem to be having a positive impact, so SADC quickly switched to military force to back up its 'soft diplomacy.' As is evident from the analysis of the case, SADC's military intervention drew a lot of criticism, but one thing is certain: a combination of diplomacy and force helped SADC achieve its objective of stabilizing Lesotho and preventing the crisis from escalating.

The analysis provides partial support for this hypothesis. SADC intervened at the pre-violence stage with political and military instruments, but was able to prevent escalation and stabilize the situation in Lesotho.

Hypothesis 4. There is a relationship between timing and strategy that affects outcome, such that:

- H4a. mixed strategies are likely to produce a better outcome
- H4b. single strategies are likely to produce a poor outcome

SADC responded to warning signals in good time and with the right strategies. As noted already in the discussion on hypothesis 3, SADC took a two-strategy approach in handling the crisis in Lesotho. Its intervention typically reflects theory: start with diplomacy and when that does not work, switch to force to elicit compliance. That was exactly what SADC did.

The organization engaged the Lesotho political elites at a very high level to find a political solution to the crisis and when that seemed to be failing it combined diplomacy with force. This approach succeeded in preventing the crisis from escalating. The analysis thus provides support for this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5. The chances for preventing conflict are better if there is a close collaboration between the UN/International community and regional, sub-regional and local organizations.

Since there was no coordination with either the UN or the international community in the handling of this crisis, it is not possible to evaluate this hypothesis. The intervention was exclusively a SADC initiative.

III: Conclusions and Key findings

It is evident from the discussions in this case study that the SADC involvement in the crisis in Lesotho was timely and it achieved its objectives: to ensure the cessation of hostilities and put Lesotho back on the course of a new electoral system that seems, this far, to guarantee peace. Even if SADC efforts did not completely resolve the conflict, they addressed the principal root of the conflict - the persistent tension between the military and the monarchy on one side and the ruling elite on the other - by sending a

clear signal that military adventurism will not be tolerated and will be dealt with either through diplomacy or force.

What this case has demonstrated is the fact that it is possible for a regional organization to single-handedly intervene in a crisis and prevent the escalation of that crisis. Unlike the other cases analyzed in this thesis, which involved interventions from both regional and international organizations, Lesotho was simply a SADC initiative. One thing is clear, however. Even in regional initiatives, there is the need for a key lead country if the intervention has to succeed. South Africa provided that leadership.

Another lesson from this intervention is that there is need for the use of force, if necessary, and at the appropriate time. After a series of diplomatic efforts failed to get the belligerents to renounce hostilities, SADC threatened and used force. As indicated in the discussion, the use of force was controversial and was more a South African intervention force, than a SADC one. But from a conflict prevention perspective, the key question one needs to ask is: did the intervention achieve the desired objective of preventing escalation? It did in this case and that is more important than legal rumblings surrounding the intervention.

Finally, another important lesson from this intervention is the fact that self-interest will always play a key role in conflict prevention. South Africa, and in fact the entire SADC was concerned about the negative impact of the crisis in Lesotho on the region. In the case of South Africa in particular, it had specific interests like the Katsie water project and the likely flow of refugees into South Africa.

By way of conclusion, it is important to stress that Lesotho has since 1998 been a stable country. The country has a new electoral system which gives smaller parties a

voice in Parliament. In May 2002, the LCD won Parliamentary elections under the new electoral system and Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili was sworn-in for a five-year term. Lesotho is now at peace with itself and with its neighbors – the new electoral system seems to have found the solution to the persistent electoral problems which have always plunged the country into crisis.

I now examine the case of the Central African Republic, which, like Lesotho, constitutes one of the few instances of some success in conflict prevention.

Chapter Five

CASE 4: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Introduction

The Central African Republic (CAR) is a francophone country, that gained political independence from France in 1960. Like most such countries, France continued to have a close relationship with CAR. This was mainly due to two reasons. First, France wanted to continue to have a strong presence and influence on all aspects of life in its former colonies, and, second, France had economic interests in CAR that it wanted to protect. For instance, the family of former French President, Valery Giscard d'Estaing family had a big stake in a French company, SOFFO, that was engaged in the rubber trade in CAR. When Giscard d'Estaing became president in 1974, he forged a warm relationship with the CAR President, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, one of Africa's most brutal dictators.⁴¹⁶ This French influence, disapproved by some countries in Africa (Guinea, for example), was to prove very useful for CAR many decades later when the French provided the necessary leadership in the search for peace in the CAR.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the crisis in the CAR using the framework developed in Chapter One. This case is important not just because it represents one of the pair in which efforts were successfully made to prevent a crisis from escalating into a full blown conflict; it also represents one of the few instances in conflict management in Africa where a former colonial power played a key role in averting a crisis. It therefore provides a very interesting lesson, especially at a time when the international community

⁴¹⁶ Jos Havermas, "Ethnic Strife in a Democratic Setting," in Monique Mekenkamp, Paul van Tongeren and Hans van de Veen, eds., *Searching for Peace in Africa: An Overview of Conflict Prevention and*

is seeking new ways of handling conflicts in Africa, one that points towards giving a leading role to former colonial powers. The central argument of this chapter is that the timely intervention of regional leaders, coupled with French leadership and influence in francophone Africa, helped prevent the 1996 crisis in the CAR from escalating into a civil war.

The chapter begins with an analysis of the warning signals of the crisis. This section mainly examines the influence of Bokassa on politics in the CAR and the kind of legacy that he left. The second section examines the fall-out from his legacy – the series of rebellions that hit the CAR in the mid-1990s. The third section examines the preventive action undertaken by regional leaders and France to ‘tame’ the CAR crisis. The last section is an analysis and evaluation of the hypotheses.

I: Analysis

In this section, I will attempt to match practice with theory. As with all previous chapters, I will analytically examine the CAR case using the theoretical framework developed in the first chapter. Integrating theory with practice will help in explaining the relationship between the independent variables – early warning, timing, and strategies – and the dependent variable – prevention.

Management Activities, Utrecht: European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation/European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 1999, p. 221.

(a) Warning Signals

This section examines the signals of the impending CAR crisis. As before, the warning signals are divided into long-term structural factors, short-term policies and finally the triggers. This is summarized in the table below.

Table 5.1: Timelines of the Central African Republic Crisis

Description	Time-line	Stage of Conflict
Bokassa and the Crisis of Governance	1965-1979	Pre-crisis
Bokassa's Legacy and its Impact	1979-1996	Pre-crisis
The Bangui Rebellions	April – November 1996	Escalation

(i) Structural Causes of the Crisis: Bokassa and the Crisis of Governance

Barthelemy Boganda was the architect and first Prime Minister of the Central African Republic, formerly known as Oubangui-Chari. Boganda died in a plane crash shortly before the country gained independence from France in August 1960. Boganda's nephew, David Dacko, succeeded him and led the country to independence.

The country's troubles started on December 31, 1965, when Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa, the army's chief of staff, staged a bloodless coup, abolished the young country's constitution, dissolved the National Assembly and made himself the center of power. In justifying the military take-over, Bokassa cited numerous reasons, notable among them being: Dacko's pro-East leaning, governmental anarchy and the deteriorating economic situation in the country.⁴¹⁷ Military rulers always cite a host of reasons to justify why they take over governments and, in most cases, the reasons are suspect. True, the CAR

was going through difficult times, especially with the economy, and that had implications for politics and everything else in the country. But military coups have never been a panacea for a country's woes, be they political or economic. In this particular case, Samuel Decalo has argued that "the true motivations for the ...coup were primarily personal and corporate, and the ripeness of the regime to any assault merely ensured its smooth and unopposed execution."⁴¹⁸

As soon as he came to power, Bokassa moved very quickly to consolidate power in and around himself. He ruled with an iron fist. Like most African dictators, no one dared to challenge him since that would have been met by outright elimination. And less than a year after the coup, power had corrupted him so much that he declared his intentions to stay in power forever because of his unique talents. He is alleged to have declared, "I am everywhere and nowhere. I see nothing yet I see all. I listen to nothing and hear everything."⁴¹⁹ As a mark of his talent and desire to stay in power forever, Bokassa arrogated to himself twelve ministerial portfolios and interfered in almost all others. He moved ministers as he pleased, preventing in the process effective government and ministerial competence.⁴²⁰ Indeed, within a short time, Bokassa had managed to instill so much fear in those around him that his ministers had become "self-seeking sycophants"⁴²¹ and everyone around him "encouraged his flights of imagination, flattered his vanity, and even concocted projects to appeal to his pride."⁴²²

⁴¹⁷ See Samuel Decalo, *Psychoses of Power: African Personal Dictatorships*, Boulder and London: Westview, 1989, p. 144.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Pierre Kalck, *Central African Republic: A Failure in Decolonization*, New York: Praeger, 1970, p. 11, cited in Decalo, p. 148.

⁴²⁰ Kalck, *Central African Republic*, in Decalo, p. 148.

⁴²¹ Kalck, *Central African Republic*, in Decalo, p. 148.

⁴²² Kalck, *Central African Republic*, in Decalo, p. 148.

As a first mark of dictatorship, Bokassa renamed his country the Central African Empire so he could confer on himself the title Emperor Bokassa I. He also promoted himself to the rank of general (1967) and marshal (1974).

His thirteen-year reign in the CAR was one of the most brutal dictatorships in modern African history⁴²³ and definitely played an important role in plunging the country into chaos two decades later.

Because of the circumstances surrounding his ascent to power and his dictatorial tendencies, Bokassa was very careful not to enrage the army - an institution he feared could make a lot of trouble for him. To get the army on his side, he promoted most of the army officers, bringing some of them into cabinet. He also pampered the army with generous salaries and sophisticated materiel and pretended that he was not aware of the illegal commercial activities that some of the officers were engaged in.⁴²⁴ Most importantly, he doubled defence allocations between 1967 and 1969, which subsequently remained the second largest allocation in the national budget.⁴²⁵

To ensure his personal security and that of his administration, Bokassa did four things. First, he ensured that most army units were stationed outside the capital in far away and virtually inaccessible areas of the country. Second, no regular troops, except his Presidential Guard, had live ammunition. Third, he made sure that the Presidential Guard was made up solely of troops from his ethnic group, the Mbaika. Fourth, and above all, he packed the police force with his kinsmen so the force was essentially an Mbaika

⁴²³ The other two brutal dictatorships that compare with Bokassa's are those of Idi Amin of Uganda and Francisco Macias Nguema of Equatorial Guinea. For a discussion on this, see Samuel Decalo, *Psychoses of Power* in which he engages in a comparative study of the brutalities of Bokassa, Amin and Nguema.

⁴²⁴ Decalo, *Psychoses of Power*, p. 157.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

force.⁴²⁶ When a leader packs the security services with people only from his ethnic group that sends a dangerous message across the country and makes other groups highly insecure. Such a situation has the potential to triggering a security dilemma and, eventually, instability. In this case, what is even more telling is the fact that Bokassa's nepotism was not limited to the security sector. The Mbaika group, a relatively small group, with little or no influence before Bokassa came to power, was all of sudden elevated to prominence. The table below gives a summary of how various ethnic groups fared in cabinet from independence until after the coup that brought Bokassa to power.

Table 5.2: Ethnic Membership of the CAR Cabinet⁴²⁷

Ethnicity	% Pop.	Independence Cabinet (%)	Pre-Coup Cabinet (%)	Post-Coup Cabinet (%)
Banda	31	0	11	0
Baya	29	14	11	15
Mandjia	8.5	0	11	8.5
Riverine	8	43	44	15
Mboum	7	0	0	8
Mbaika	6.5	0	0	23
Other	10	43	22	31
N=		8	11	15

When you have a group that has the smallest population occupying a position of prominence, especially at the cabinet level, that is a potent signal that there is something wrong with the distribution of power. This is even more disturbing given that the Mbaika never had any cabinet representation prior to the Bokassa era. In short, Bokassa was not only a brutal dictator, he was also a leader who played the 'ethnic card' by surrounding himself with only people from his own ethnic group. This left a bitter legacy on the

⁴²⁶ Ibid

political landscape of the CAR – a legacy of discrimination and political and economic exclusion.

(ii) Medium Term Signals: Bokassa's Legacy and Its Impact

Bokassa's grip on the Central African Republic for more than a decade was a classic case of centralization and personalization of power - key features of African neopatrimonial regimes.⁴²⁸ Under such regimes, as was the case of the CAR, there are hardly any checks and balances. The leader arrogates to himself all the power that there is. There usually is a "cabinet", but it is one that merely sings the praises of the "strong man". And, in fact, in this case, as noted earlier, because of the many portfolios that Bokassa held, the whole concept of cabinet had little meaning. Members of the cabinet dared not challenge any policy emanating from the "palace" lest they lose their job. They told the "strong man" what he wanted to hear and not what was the actual reality on the ground. In fact, the CAR under Bokassa was a classic case where "institutions with clear rules and procedures do not govern political life; rather, it is the personal relations binding ruler, supporters, clients, and rivals that do so."⁴²⁹ Under such a system, the ruler, in need of support, dispenses rewards in return for allegiance, leading to patron-client relations which "spread out from the centre, creating a network of obligations that connects its participants to the ruler".⁴³⁰

Bokassa was not only a tyrant, he was also an embarrassment to CAR and to France. For many years, France had to tolerate "Papa Bok" (a derogatory name the French had

⁴²⁷ Morrison et al., *Black Africa: A Contemporary Handbook*, New York: Free Press, 1972, p. 202, cited in Decalo, *Psychoses of Power*, p. 147.

⁴²⁸ Brian Titley, *Dark Age: The Political Odyssey of Emperor Bokassa*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 1997, p. 209.

given Bokassa) mainly because, like most of her former colonies, the CAR was a strategic market for French industrial products and a cheap source of raw materials for French industries. In the name of maintaining stability, so that she could continuously guard her interests in CAR, France provided significant amounts of aid to the CAR and turned a blind eye to the rampant human rights abuses of the Bokassa regime.

In fact, like rulers in most of France's former colonies, Bokassa's continuous stay in power was very much dependent on French support. Once France withdrew, his regime crumbled. This came in 1979 following a spate of student demonstrations during which Bokassa unleashed the merciless force of his Imperial Guard. According to one estimate, about 500 students were killed during the demonstration.⁴³¹ By this act, Bokassa crossed the threshold of French tolerance. He had "become an unacceptable political embarrassment and his retention in office was a major blot on France's international reputation."⁴³² As a mark of real "colonial interference", on September 20, 1979, France mounted "*Operation Barracuda*" during which a contingent of French paratroopers descended on Bangui together with one of Bokassa's archrivals - David Dacko - to install him as the new president of CAR. This marked the end of Bokassa's grip on power in the CAR.

For the purposes of this thesis, the key question one needs to ask, is whether there is any correlation between the Bokassa years and current happenings in CAR? Without doubt, Bokassa has had a lasting impact, and a negative one, on politics in the CAR. As one observer aptly summed it up, "The excesses of the Bokassa regime are legendary and

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Samuel Decalo, *Psychoses of Power: African Personal Dictatorships*, Boulder: Westview, 1989, p. 163.

⁴³² Ibid.

continue to plague the political and economic development of the country.”⁴³³ Two important issues stand out in this regard.

First, Bokassa came to power at a very important moment in the life of the young CAR. Like most African countries, CAR was just coming out of colonialism in the early 1960s and needed, at the very least, to develop viable and durable social, political and economic institutions so as to enable the country to live up to the challenge of independence. As one of its early leaders, instead of helping build such institutions, Bokassa presided over running down the few institutions that existed in the CAR. He created a culture of terror and brutality, with complete disregard for basic human rights. It is possible to argue, therefore, that, successive CAR leaders inherited this culture from Bokassa and have been quick to use it to their advantage.

Second and equally important is the fact that the military has dominated the political scene for most of CAR’s post-independent life, eclipsing any attempts at democratic self-government. Coming to power through the use of force has created a feeling, particularly within the military, that it is the only group that has the right to govern and can always use force to change the direction of politics in the CAR. Thus, if there is anything that Bokassa has left the CAR, it is the influence of the military in politics, leading to what has been termed the “coup cycle”, which thrives in states that have all the right preconditions – elites who play the ethnic card, regional or religious constituencies, lack of institutions of governance and no history of press and civil freedoms. And the CAR, post-Bokassa, has all these preconditions. In sum, Bokassa’s heavy-handedness, poor

⁴³³ Blossom Perry, “Post of the Month: Bangui”, *State Magazine*, The US Department of State, No. 442, January 2001, p. 7.

development of democracy, and factionalism left the CAR with a poor political culture and recurring history of military intervention in politics.

(iii) The Triggers: Patasse's Policies and the Bangui Rebellions

It is evident from the preceding discussion that, as in most African countries, the process of post-colonial state building was a failure in the CAR. Much has already been said about Bokassa and his legacy. It will be recalled that France tolerated him for a very long time until he finally became an embarrassment, leading to its withdrawal of support. Bokassa was overthrown in 1979 in a coup led by David Dacko⁴³⁴ and backed by France. In September 1979, under *Operation Barracuda*, France lifted Dacko and a contingent of French paratroopers into CAR⁴³⁵. By this action, France deposed Bokassa and installed Dacko as the leader of the CAR. On that day, according to one account, "Flanked by French troops, Dacko appealed over the radio for the Central African Army's acquiescence to the overthrow of Bokassa, and "formally" invited French contingents to help police the capital during the transitional period."⁴³⁶

Through this "change of guard" France signaled its willingness to remain in charge in the CAR. Unlike Bokassa, however, Dacko, even with the backing of France, only had a short stint in office. After two years in office, he was toppled in yet another coup. Andre Kolingba, the army chief, came to power in 1981. One of his first actions, which was aimed at consolidating his hold on power, was to form a military government and ban political parties. Ten years later, in 1991, Kolingba succumbed to pressures to liberalize

⁴³⁴ Dacko was the first post-independence president of the CAR. He was overthrown by Bokassa, his army commander, in 1965.

⁴³⁵ *Psychoses of Power*, p. 163.

⁴³⁶ *African Research Bulletin*, Political Series (October 1979), cited in *Ibid*.

politics in CAR. Multiparty presidential and legislative elections were held in October 1992, but the results were nullified due to irregularities. Another round of elections was held in August 1993, in which the electorate rejected Kolingba. Ange-Felix Patasse and his Central African People's Liberation Party (MPLC) came to power in a coalition government. If there is anything that differentiated Patasse's stewardship from those of his predecessors, it is the fact that his reign was punctuated by unrest, leading to riots and looting by disgruntled armed forces in 1997 – the beginning of the crisis examined in this chapter.

The first rebellion in the chain of events in CAR took place on April 18, 1996. On this day, five army regiments - *the Regiment mixte d'intervention, the Regiment de defense operationnelle du territoire, the Regiment de soutien, and the Escadron blinde d'intervention* - mutinied against the government over salary payments. Apart from their demand for the payment of three months of postponed salary, they also demanded an improvement in their living conditions and the dismissal of the army chief of staff.⁴³⁷

It will be recalled that, during his reign, Bokassa created a Presidential Guard which was completely separate from the main military of the CAR.⁴³⁸ Successive governments continued this tradition. Obviously, this Guard received better treatment and was always on call to defend the President. Thus, during this rebellion, the Guards took up arms to defend the President, leading to serious confrontations with the rebellious soldiers. The police were also on the side of government, as were French troops stationed in the CAR -

⁴³⁷ Moussounga Itsouhou Mbadanga, "The Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB)" *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 8, 4, winter 2001, pp. 21-37, p. 22.). Also *Le Monde*, 21 April 1996.

⁴³⁸ The presidential guard was made up of 500 troops and the army was made up of 3000 troops. The former was directly under the control of the president. See Lucy Jones, "CAR: Plagued by Mutinies" found at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1360313.stm>).

*Elements d'assistance operationnelle.*⁴³⁹ The April 96 rebellion resulted in 9 deaths and about 40 casualties - both civilian and military.⁴⁴⁰ The rebellion ended when Patasse conceded to the demands of the mutinous soldiers with a promise to increase their wages.⁴⁴¹

A month after the first rebellion, on May 18, 1996, the same group of soldiers who were involved in the first rebellion took up arms again. This second rebellion was a follow-up of the first one. The soldiers' demands were similar to their previous ones: the government had failed to honour its part of the agreement that brought the first rebellion to an end. In addition, they also had three further demands:⁴⁴²

1. They would not succumb to any attempt to disarm them;
2. They were against the allocation of the arms manufacturing plant at Camp Kasai - the country's main barracks - to the control of the presidential guard;⁴⁴³ and
3. They demanded amnesty.

After the second rebellion, President Patasse was still adamant. Instead of paying attention to the demands of the soldiers, Patasse chose the 'blame game' and turned the crisis into an ethnic dispute. This is not surprising since it is in keeping with the strategy usually adopted by power-hungry African politicians when their position comes under threat. Patasse is a northern civilian of Baya extraction. He linked his rival, former

⁴³⁹ The CAR had one of the biggest French military bases in Africa - second only to the one in Djibouti with a troop strength of over 1,400 soldiers.

⁴⁴⁰ Mbadinga, "The Inter-African Mission", p. 34.

⁴⁴¹ Fiona McFarlane and Mark Malan, "Crisis and Response in the Central African Republic: A New Trend in African Peacekeeping?", *African Security Review*, Vol. 7, 2, 1998 at www.iss.co.za.

⁴⁴² Mbadinga, "The Inter-African Mission", p. 34.

⁴⁴³ This is without doubt a dangerous move by the government both in terms of its timing and motive. It should have been obvious to the government that the rank and file of the country's army would not tolerate it.

President Kolingba, whose minority Yakoma ethnic group forms the majority in the army, to the revolts.

Once the rebellions assumed an ethnic dimension, Patasse could not see the crisis from an objective perspective. He was up against formidable opponents and giving in to their demands by honouring his part of the agreement that ended the first mutiny would have saved his regime and spared the CAR from descending into anarchy. But giving in was succumbing to the pressures of his rival, Patasse apparently reasoned.

To make matters worse, President Patasse did not only ignore the demands of the mutinous soldiers, he also took another strategic move that was bound to be fiercely resisted by the army. He decided to transfer troops stationed in the capital, Bangui, to Bouar, far away in the hinterland. In addition, he also attempted to charge one of the leaders of the rebellion, Captain Anicet Saulet, on charges of stealing funds during the regime of Kolingba. It was obvious that this was an attempt to prosecute Saulet, not for stealing, but for his involvement in the revolts. This triggered a third rebellion. This rebellion took place on November 16, 1999. This time, one of the initial actions of the mutinous soldiers was to deploy across the city in an attempt to disarm the supporters of President Patasse.

Three rebellions in succession and the government was still adamant. It is evident from this chain of events that the crisis in the CAR did not follow the typical pattern of most conflicts in Africa where a rebel group takes up arms against a national army that is, in most cases, on the side of the government. Instead, this was an example of section of the military taking up arms against the government. Clearly, therefore, it involved civil-

military relations and particularly how the army viewed itself within the power hierarchy in the CAR.

In the study of intervention by military officers in politics in Africa, a number of reasons are usually advanced for why the military takes up arms against the government. The most important and the one that best describes the CAR situation is what Eric Nordlinger terms the “military’s corporate interests.” Nordlinger notes that every public institution is concerned about the protection of its interests and “the defense or enhancement of the military’s corporate interests is easily the most important interventionist motive.”⁴⁴⁴ After the third rebellion, it was evident that the crisis in the CAR was not going to go away unless decisive efforts were made to find a lasting solution. It was at this stage that regional leaders and France began a search for a solution.

The case of the CAR demonstrates the continuing influence of a former colonial power - France, in the CAR - and how this influence was useful in a time of crisis. It also demonstrated the emerging trend in most of Africa - the involvement of neighbors in designing local solutions to problems affecting them.

As has been noted throughout this thesis, an important component of prevention is early warning and the timing of the response that follows the warning signals. As stated in Chapter One, Alexander George and Jane Holl got it right when they noted that, while there might be disagreement on the scope of preventive diplomacy and the strategies to be employed, there is no disagreement on the importance of obtaining early warning

⁴⁴⁴ Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977, p. 65.

information.⁴⁴⁵ It should be noted, however, that, much as early warning is important, it is not an end in itself. It is important only so long as it is followed by early action.

Probably in a bid to make amends for what many described as inaction in Rwanda, where France was accused of ‘standing and watching’ while up to a million Rwandese were massacred, the former colonial power sought to repair her image in francophone Africa by demonstrating leadership and acting proactively in the CAR.

As also mentioned already in the preceding chapters, the challenge for conflict prevention is to know exactly the types of events that can provoke a crisis as well as to design measured responses to prevent escalation. France was quick to recognize that events in the CAR were heading towards a crisis. In fact, unlike in most crises in Africa, in the CAR both France and regional leaders paid serious attention to the warning signals coming out of Bangui and acted swiftly to prevent escalation. In 1996, when France and regional leaders intervened, the crisis was clearly at the pre-crisis stage, a stage where it was still possible to influence the position of both the government and the mutinous elements within the CAR army.

It should be made clear, however, that the case of the CAR was unique in a number of respects. First, as mentioned already, the crisis was a series of mutinies which could have degenerated into a full-blown war but for the timely intervention. Second, and most importantly, France had troops already stationed in the CAR so it was very easy to respond to a developing crisis within hours.

Even though the CAR was under a brutal dictatorship for most of its post-independence years, one could argue that it was relatively stable. As in most African

⁴⁴⁵ Alexander L. George and Jane E. Holl, “The Warning-Response Problem and Missed Opportunities in Preventive Diplomacy,” in Bruce Jentleson, ed., *Opportunities Missed*, p. 21.

countries, the dictatorship had a tight grip on the country and the people. True, there were violations of civil and political rights and little or no press freedom, yet political upheavals were kept in check. Cracks began to emerge within the country's political set-up in the mid-90s. With the long-time dictator gone, power was up for grabs and the military establishment seized the opportunity quickly.

In the diplomacy of conflict management, one key ingredient is the availability and willingness of an influential power to take the lead in any activity that is aimed at finding a peaceful solution to a crisis. The United States failed to provide that leadership in Liberia and France failed to provide it in Rwanda. But, in the CAR, France was determined not to see a repetition of Rwanda.

The third rebellion in November 1996 coincided with the annual meeting of France and its former colonies. At this summit in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in December 1996, diplomatic efforts were initiated, with the leadership and blessing of France, to find a political settlement to the crisis. The francophone community therefore clearly responded to the warning signals coming out of Bangui and took up the challenge to ensure that the crisis did not escalate. They did two important things in their response to the developing crisis. First, regional leaders became fully engaged from a diplomatic point of view, with efforts to find compromise between the mutinous elements in the army and the government of Patasse. And second, and most importantly, France guaranteed security in Bangui by deploying its troops stationed in the CAR. Without doubt, these two initial events helped contain the crisis within the confines of Bangui.

(b) Strategies

After the third rebellion, diplomatic efforts were started with the aim of finding a political settlement to the crisis. At a Francophonie Summit held in Ouagadougou on December 4-6, 1996, a former CAR Prime Minister, Jean-Paul Ngoupande, together with the political opposition in CAR, consulted French officials about the possibility of persuading African states to get involved in finding a political settlement to the unfolding crisis.⁴⁴⁶ This was followed by a formal request by President Patasse urging the Summit to intervene. Concerned by the situation and its implications for regional stability, and in view of President Patasse's request, a regional peace initiative was put together to end the crisis. Under this initiative, the leaders of Gabon, Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad were tasked to go to Bangui to negotiate a truce between the rebellious forces and the government.⁴⁴⁷ This initiative was out of the spirit of La Francophonie, since Mali and Burkina Faso are not Central African countries. And what is interesting is that Burkina Faso is not known for brokering peace. In fact, it is a 'peace spoiler' in the West African sub-region. Blaise Compaore, the Burkinabe leader, allegedly helped Charles Taylor to destabilize Liberia (see Liberia chapter) and has been implicated in a number of 'blood diamond' deals by the UN.⁴⁴⁸

Under this initiative, a fifteen-day truce was brokered and eventually extended until January 1997. Supervised by the former transitional president of Mali, Amadou Toumani

⁴⁴⁶ Mbandinga, p. 22.

⁴⁴⁷ Jos Havermans, "Ethnic Strife in a Democratic Setting", p. 223. See also Mbandinga, p. 22.

⁴⁴⁸ See for example, "Crackdown on 'blood diamonds'", *The Guardian* at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sierra/article/0,2763,413785,00.html>

Toure, this initiative eventually paved the way for other initiatives which helped set the CAR on the path of national reconciliation.⁴⁴⁹

Following from this initiative, a national dialogue conference was held in Bangui from 11-16 January 1997, leading ultimately to the signing of the Bangui Accords. Apart from ending the chain of mutinies, the Accords were important in three respects: they provided for amnesty for the mutineers, for the formation of a government of national unity, which was inaugurated in January 1997, and for the replacement of the French military force by an African peacekeeping force - *Mission Inter-Africaine de Surveillance de l'Application des Accords de Bangui* (MISAB).⁴⁵⁰

The signing of the Bangui Accords and the formation of MISAB was timely since, in early 1997, one could argue that the crisis in the CAR had not yet escalated. Getting the government to work with the opposition and the mutinous soldiers in a unity government and replacing the French troops with an African force all contributed to solidifying peace. And the interesting thing is that diplomatic efforts did not stop with the signing of the peace accords. Regional leaders followed up with other initiatives to consolidate peace in the CAR. One such initiative was a monitoring committee.

(i) *The International Monitoring Committee (IMC)*

Following the mediation mission that resulted in the Bangui Accords and in a bid to ensure that the terms of the Accords did not remain mere rhetoric, an International Mediation Committee (IMC) was created to monitor and implement the measures

⁴⁴⁹ Havermans, p. 223.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

contained in the final communiqué of December 8, 1996 and to put in place measures that would ensure that the crisis does not recur.⁴⁵¹

The IMC was made up of representatives of the member states of the mediation committee - Gabon, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad - as well as the consultant of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The latter was there in a diplomatic advisory capacity.⁴⁵²

Apart from monitoring the terms of the Accords, the peacekeeping force, MISAB, was placed under the political authority of the supervisor of the mediation committee, Toumani Toure, and personal representatives of heads of state of member countries of the committee. Accordingly, the IMC directed the action of MISAB and received political input from four concerned heads of state, particularly the president of Gabon, Omar Bongo, who was the chair of the IMC. To ensure that its task was effectively discharged, the IMC not only maintained constant touch with the various heads of state, but also various CAR authorities as well foreign missions and international organizations. The latter group provided diplomatic, financial and material support necessary for the successful discharge of the committee's duties.⁴⁵³

As already indicated, and in keeping with the rules of negotiations to end conflicts, political diplomacy has to be complemented with military diplomacy and, sometimes, force. The following section examines first the French military involvement, then MISAB, and finally the UN intervention.

⁴⁵¹ Mbandinga, p. 22.

⁴⁵² Ibid., p. 34.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

(ii) Colonial Power to the Rescue?

Unlike Britain, France has maintained a very close relationship with its former colonies after they attained independence. During several centuries of occupation, France pursued a policy of assimilation. Through policy, France groomed its colonial subjects to “think and behave like the French.” As a result, France literally remained in most of Africa to keep watch over her subjects⁴⁵⁴, but most importantly to take care of her business interests in the colonies.

To be sure, France had its own interests to pursue in most of its former colonies, especially those that are rich in natural resources. A former French foreign assistance minister, Bernard Debre, once told *Jeune Afrique*, “For France, Africa is also a market. Not a captive market, certainly, but not a sieve either. When we aid a country, we must have a minimum in return.”⁴⁵⁵ The CAR is one of its former colonies into which France had poured lots of aid money. It is also one of the mineral-rich countries where Paris has substantive investments. In 1992, for example, 74% of the country’s exports of diamonds, timber, coffee and cotton went to France.⁴⁵⁶ France had, and still has, numerous investments in the CAR.

To safeguard its investments, France did not only maintain close diplomatic ties with her former colonies, she ensured that she wielded a lot of military clout by maintaining a huge troop presence in most of these countries. France had seven military bases in Africa with a total of 9,000 troops. In addition, it has military cooperation agreements with 23

⁴⁵⁴ See for instance, Mamadou Diouf, “The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Colonization Project”, *Development and Change*, Vol. 29, 4, 1998, pp. 671-696.

⁴⁵⁵ Megan Arney, “Rebellion in Central Africa Stings Paris”, *The Militant*, vol. 61, 4, 27 January 1997, found at www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/35/020.html

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

countries in Africa. There were about 1,400 French troops stationed in the CAR⁴⁵⁷ - the second largest French military establishment in Africa.⁴⁵⁸ In the name of maintaining order, France has frequently seized the opportunity to intervene when the situation demanded. Since launching her first intervention in Gabon in 1964, France has intervened 35 times in 34 years – one intervention per year, on average.⁴⁵⁹ Its 36th intervention and probably the biggest intervention in a former colony, is currently underway in Cote d'Ivoire. From 500 troops in September 22, 2002, a week after the beginning of the Ivorian crisis, French troop strength has grown today to about 4,000.⁴⁶⁰

Given that France pursued an assimilationist policy in its former colonies and never “really left”, even after those colonies became independent, the French troop presence might be viewed in times of relative stability, by many as a nuisance, or even a hangover from colonial domination. But in the current climate of instability in most of Africa, the presence of French troops can sometimes be a very strong deterrent and their timely intervention can be even more welcoming. That was the case in the CAR.

With the second largest French troop presence (next to Cote d'Ivoire), the CAR has for many years been central to French foreign policy. France used its base there to carry out most of its interventions in Africa, including the CAR at the beginning of her crisis in 1996.⁴⁶¹ France's intervention in the CAR was within the context of her 1994 military policy *Livre Blanc sur la Defence*, in which French external intervention is justified by one of six crisis scenarios: “regional conflict not involving the vital interests of France; regional conflict involving the vital interests of France; attack against French territorial

⁴⁵⁷ Mbadinga, “The Inter-African Mission”, p. 35.

⁴⁵⁸ Megan Arney, “Rebellion in Central Africa Stings Paris”

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

integrity beyond the metropolis; implementation of the bilateral defence agreements; operations for the maintenance of peace and international law; resurgence of a major threat against Western Europe.”⁴⁶²

French intervention was justified on the basis of the fourth scenario – the implementation a bilateral defence agreement. Within this framework, France was prepared to prevent regional conflicts of low intensity.⁴⁶³ Most bilateral agreements between France and its former colonies were signed immediately after the latter became independent, at the height of the Cold War. Then, France could go to any extent to ensure stability in a former colony. However, the new reality of the post-Cold War environment limited French military intervention, even within the context of its *Livre Blanc*. To be sure, it would have been difficult for French leaders to justify an all-out intervention in a former colony, especially when it is risky for French troops. This is evident in the nature and extent of French intervention following the 1996 mutinies in the CAR.

In April 1996, when the first mutiny broke out over salary arrears for the military, French troops stationed in the CAR took up positions in the capital, Bangui, with a mandate to “protect French nationals and to help defend the presidential palace and other key installations.”⁴⁶⁴ On the face of it, this intervention seems benevolent, but France had to do it not for altruistic reasons but to safeguard her interests in the CAR. Anarchy would mean a huge loss on French investments in the CAR as well as the loss of the lives of French citizens in the CAR. In other words, France was intervening more for her self-

⁴⁶⁰ See for instance, “France Sends Troops to Ivory Coast,” *BBC News*, September 22, 2002; and “Ivory Coast Peace Drive,” *BBC News*, September 15, 2003 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.

⁴⁶¹ Jos Havermans, “Ethnic Strife in a Democratic Setting”, p. 222.

⁴⁶² Mbadinga, p. 35.

interest than to save the lives of the citizens of the CAR. This kind of action seems to suggest that preventive efforts by former colonial powers is most likely if self-interest is at stake.

For the purpose of this thesis, however, the important consideration is the effect of the timely intervention on the escalation of conflict in the CAR. The intervention served two important and related purposes. First, by defending the presidential palace, France sent a clear message to the rebellious soldiers that Paris would not tolerate the disruption of the democratic process in the CAR. Ange-Felix Patasse had been elected in free and fair elections in 1993. By reacting swiftly to protect the regime in place, France reiterated the core of her foreign policy in Africa – protecting the democratic state. Second, France also sent a signal that she was still in control in the CAR. This was very important because the overwhelming military might of the French troops is enough deterrent for rebels who are by all means cognizant of the costs and benefits of any rebellion under “big brother’s” watchful eyes. The reaction of France after the second rebellion broke out confirms the above assertion.

When the second rebellion broke out in May 1996, France became alarmed. She brought in about 500 reinforcements. After five days of fighting which left eleven soldiers and 32 civilians dead, France was able to suppress the rebellion.⁴⁶⁵ After the second rebellion, France offered to support the government to pay the salary arrears of the soldiers with the hope of getting them to lay down their arms. Laudable as it was, this French gesture did not help prevent further unrest.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

During the third rebellion in November 1996, France responded with even more force. After more than 100 people were killed in clashes on the street, France ordered its entire 1,450 troops stationed in the CAR in the streets of Bangui to maintain law and order. It was at this point that regional African leaders got involved and brokered the Bangui Accords. One of the conditions of the Accords, as noted already, was the replacement of French troops with an African force. There are two explanations for the need for the replacement of French troops. First, much as France has a stake in maintaining stability in the CAR, there is a limit to how much risk she can tolerate, especially within the context of the post-Cold War international environment. Paris did not want to be dragged deeply into internal conflicts in its former colonies. It was willing to intervene to stabilize the situation, but felt that the long arduous task of restoring law and order should be the job of Africans themselves. This is probably because restoring law and order can sometimes be risky and France might not be able to justify to its citizens why it should continue to be on ground long after the conflict has ended. The second explanation has to do with an effort by regional leaders to put in place a force that is “neutral” and acceptable to both parties. By defending the regime in place during most of the rebellions, and resorting to offensive actions to stop them, Paris had clearly signalled her lack of neutrality and it would therefore be difficult for the rebellious soldiers to trust France.

In any case, one cannot ignore the importance of the French influence. It is possible to argue that but for the swift intervention of the French troops stationed in the CAR, the situation would have deteriorated rapidly, making any preventive efforts difficult.

(iii) The Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB)

Military diplomacy in the CAR moved from the French to an African involvement in February 1997. As mentioned already, under the terms of the Bangui agreements, French troops were to be replaced by an African force. With financial and logistic support from France and the OAU, 800 troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Mali, Senegal and Togo deployed in Bangui. The mandate of MISAB was to:

1. Maintain peace and security in Bangui;
2. Supervise the process of disarmament of mutinous soldiers and militias; and
3. Monitor the implementation of the accords, including national elections.⁴⁶⁶

Like most intervention forces in Africa, the legal basis of MISAB has come under scrutiny. In recent years, there have frequently been problems with interventions mounted by organizations (mainly regional and sub-regional), especially when these interventions do not have the official approval of the Security Council, the only body in international law that has the right to authorize a military intervention. Both the ECOWAS/ECOMOG intervention in Liberia in 1990 and the SADC/South African intervention in Lesotho came under such scrutiny.⁴⁶⁷

In general, one of the cardinal rules governing UN peacekeeping operations is the consent of the parties involved.⁴⁶⁸ Since peacekeeping was initially designed to respond to inter-state conflicts, getting consent from all parties in intra-state conflicts is rather difficult. The practice has therefore been to get the consent of the state. This is also in keeping with international law, where a state has the right to call on outsiders to intervene

⁴⁶⁶ Jos Havermans, "Ethnic Strife in a Democratic Setting", p. 224.

⁴⁶⁷ See Liberia and Lesotho chapters.

within its territory to prevent bloodshed. There is a caveat though. According to Tom Farer, international law supposes that when the state exerts effective control over its territory and people, governing officials have the prerogative to express the will of the state in international affairs.⁴⁶⁹ The issue then becomes that of determining to what extent a state exerts effective control over its land and people. In a situation where an intra-state crisis is developing, the general assumption is that a group or certain groups within the state have withdrawn their allegiance to the central state and the governing officials. Therefore, it is legally impossible for the state to meet the standard set by international law.

This inability to meet the high international law standards brings to the fore the debate about the legalities of intervention versus the responsibility to protect innocent civilians. This argument is central to the work of the International Commission for Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), which produced a ground-breaking report in December 2001. The reports makes a compelling argument to the effect that a government loses its sovereignty once it fails to protect its people; and, in such a situation, the international community has a ‘responsibility to protect.’⁴⁷⁰ When mutinies broke out in the CAR, the country had not collapsed – the government in power was still in control. This is especially true because the problem in the CAR, as I have noted already, was not a classic case of civil war; it was more a coup d’etat than civil war. Against this background, the government had the right to ask neighboring states to intervene on its behalf. In addition

⁴⁶⁸ The other principles are: impartiality and the use of force only in self-defence. See the section on “Peacekeeping” in chapter I.

⁴⁶⁹ Tom J. Farer, ‘Panama: Beyond the Charter Paradigm’, *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 84, 1990, p.510.

⁴⁷⁰ The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect*, Ottawa: IDRC, 2001.

to the legal argument, from a moral perspective the international community is said to have the responsibility to protect in a situation where people are dying.⁴⁷¹

Consequently, following from the Bangui Accords and in response to a request from President Patasse, members of the IMC decided to establish, from January 31, 1997, an inter-African force in the Central African Republic.⁴⁷² MISAB deployed in Bangui on February 8, 1997, with about 800 troops from six countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Mali, Senegal and Togo. The force was under the military command of Gabon with the logistical and financial support of France⁴⁷³ and communications support from Canada.⁴⁷⁴ The force was mandated to:

1. Restore peace and security;
2. Monitor the implementation of the Bangui Agreements; and
3. Conduct operations to disarm the former rebels, the militia and all other unlawfully armed individuals.

The mandate handed to MISAB was broad and had elements of both Chapter VI and VII peacekeeping. The first mandate fell under Chapter VI - classic peacekeeping - whilst the second mandate has some elements of Chapter VII. This is because "disarming former rebels, the militia and all other unlawfully armed individuals" requires some use of force. This kind of mandate is probably informed by the fact that in situations of internal conflict, it is probably very difficult to do classic peacekeeping and to pretend to be neutral. The force was intervening based on a request from the government of CAR.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² See www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/minurcaB.htm

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ See "Central African Republic: IRIN background brief", at www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Hornet/irin_61198.html

The force went in to ensure that security prevails and there is no way of doing that if mutinous soldiers still hold on to their weapons.

The danger with such a mandate is that the force risks being drawn into the conflict and being seen as partial. But in order to allay the fears of the mutineers, MISAB troops collaborated with both government troops and former mutineers by conducting joint patrols aimed at restoring peace.⁴⁷⁵ This collaboration was only short-lived. In late June 1997, fighting broke out between MISAB forces and former mutineers, leading to serious casualties and the displacement of tens of thousands of Bangui residents.⁴⁷⁶

It is interesting to note that, up until this time, the crisis in the CAR had only been confined to the capital, Bangui, the seat of power, thereby giving credence to the contention that the crisis was more of a coup d'etat than civil war. In the wake of the clash between the "peacekeepers" and the mutineers, hopes of a lasting peace were shattered once again. After this round of disturbances, both Presidents Patasse and Bongo made separate appeals to the UN Security Council to support MISAB. In his July 4, 1997 request, President Patasse appealed to the Council to provide a legal and political framework for MISAB member states by authorizing them to restore peace and security in the CAR.⁴⁷⁷ President Bongo, for his part, acting as mediator and on behalf of MISAB, on July 7, 1997, asked the Council to authorize the Mission.⁴⁷⁸ By its Resolution 1125, the Security Council unanimously provided authorization to MISAB.⁴⁷⁹

It is interesting to note that MISAB had been in action since February 1997, several months before Security Council authorization. This is an indication of how much the

⁴⁷⁵ See "Worldwide Refugee Information - Country Report: Central African Republic 1998" at www.refugees.org

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ See UN doc. S/1997/561.

post-Cold War period had transformed the UN. Even though the Security Council is the sole body in charge of authorizing peacekeeping operations, Chapter VIII of the UN Charter makes provision for regional arrangements, though with prior Council approval. But MISAB did not emanate from a regional organization, thereby making the intervention not completely illegal. As Boutros Boutros-Ghali has noted:

The Charter deliberately provides no precise definition of regional arrangements and agencies, thus allowing useful flexibility for undertaking by a group of states to deal with a matter appropriate for regional action which also could contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. Such associations and entities could include treaty-based organizations, whether created before or after the founding of the United Nations, regional organizations for mutual security and defence, organizations for general regional development or for co-operation on a particular economic topic or function, and groups created to deal with a specific political, economic or social issue of current concern.⁴⁸⁰

Despite this legal loophole provided by the Charter, one thing is clear: such an operation was not possible in the first place during the Cold War and could not get off the ground without the blessing of the Security Council.

In order to give the force enough time to accomplish its task, the Council eventually renewed its mandate four times: on November 6, 1997 by Resolution 1136; on February 5, 1998 by Resolution 1152; on March 16, 1998 by Resolution 1155; and on March 27, 1998 by resolution 1159.⁴⁸¹

MISAB did not make the CAR a peace haven but, at the very least, it succeeded in stabilizing the situation and ensuring that the crisis was contained within the capital. One notable achievement of MISAB was that it created the enabling environment for a national reconciliation conference to be held between February 26 and March 5, 1998,

⁴⁷⁸ See UN doc. S/1997/543.

⁴⁷⁹ See UN Press Release SC/6407

⁴⁸⁰ See UN doc. A/47/277-S/2411, 17 June 1992; Also, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping.*"

during which participants from trade unions, political parties and human rights groups adopted the National Reconciliation Pact - yet another attempt to bring peace to the beleaguered country.⁴⁸²

Given that most of the financial burden of MISAB was borne by France, when the latter signaled its intentions not only to withdraw its troops in the CAR, but also its support to MISAB by mid-April, 1998, the mission was forced to wind up. Member states were willing to maintain their presence but did not have the financial capacity to do so.⁴⁸³ The UN took the mantle from there. Making a case for a UN peacekeeping force in the CAR, the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in a report to the Security Council noted that:

If security and stability in the Central African Republic, and indeed in the subregion, are to be maintained, and further progress is to be made towards sustainable national reconciliation, the only viable option remains the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation to take over from MISAB.⁴⁸⁴

The Secretary-General's appeal was compelling enough that the Security Council ensured that no vacuum was created in the management of security in the CAR. Consequently, the Council authorized the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission in the CAR.

(iv) United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA)

On March 27, 1998, acting on the report of the Secretary-General, the Security Council unanimously decided to establish the United Nations Mission in Central Africa Republic

⁴⁸¹ Mbadinga, p. 32.

⁴⁸² See for example, *Ibid.*

⁴⁸³ See www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/minurcaB.htm

⁴⁸⁴ See, "Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Resolution 1152 (1998) Concerning the Situation in the Central African Republic," UN doc S/1998/148, 23 February 1998.

(MINURCA) with up to 1,350 military personnel, for an initial period of three months, effective from 15 April, 1998.⁴⁸⁵ MINURCA was given a very broad mandate:

- “To assist in maintaining and enhancing security and stability, including freedom of movement, in Bangui and the immediate vicinity of the city;
- To assist the national security forces in maintaining law and order and in protecting key installations in Bangui;
- To supervise, control storage, and monitor the final disposition of all weapons retrieved in the course of the disarmament exercise;
- To ensure security and freedom of movement of the United Nations personnel and the safety and security of United Nations property;
- To assist in coordination with other international efforts in a short-term police trainers programme and in other capacity-building efforts of the national police, and to provide advice on the restructuring of the national police and special police forces;
- To provide advice and technical support to the national electoral bodies regarding the electoral code and plans for the conduct of the legislative elections.”⁴⁸⁶

Determined to consolidate the success chalked by MISAB, the UN ensured that the deployment of MINURCA proceeded as planned, achieving operational capability on April 15, 1998.⁴⁸⁷ It is evident from MINURCA’s mandate that the whole mission was shrouded in ambiguity. Even though it was supposed to be a peacekeeping force, the mission was also tasked (even though not explicitly stated), to perform Chapter VII peace enforcement. Among other duties, the mission was to ensure security and stability in and

⁴⁸⁵ SC Resolution 1159 (1998), 27 March 1998.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

around Bangui as well as to ensure the maintenance of law and order around key installations. This is clearly beyond the purview of Chapter VI peacekeeping. This is understandable given that, in an internal crisis situation, where there is always the possibility of armed groups threatening the fragile peace, a peacekeeping force cannot pretend to be impartial since doing that not only puts civilian lives at risk, but the lives of the “peacekeepers” themselves. It is interesting to note that, since the end of the Cold War, the UN Security Council has learnt some lessons in deploying peacekeeping missions in intra-state conflict situations. As a result, most peacekeeping missions are given an ambiguous mandate so as to make room for peace enforcement, when necessary. In fact, in some cases, clauses are explicitly inserted in the mandate of a mission to authorize it to perform peace enforcement, as was done in February 2000 for the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).⁴⁸⁸

MINURCA indeed went beyond classic peacekeeping. Apart from its peace enforcement element, the mission also had some “nation building” tasks. It was involved in building the capacity of the country’s police force as well as helping the country prepare for elections. Because of this political task, UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, named a special representative to CAR, Nigerian diplomat Oluyemi Adeniji. One of the responsibilities of Ambassador Adeniji was promoting the electoral process.⁴⁸⁹ The appointment of a special representative for CAR was not an isolated case,⁴⁹⁰ and again

⁴⁸⁷ www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/minurcaB.htm

⁴⁸⁸ “Sierra Leone – UNAMSIL –Mandate” <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unamsil/mandate.html>

⁴⁸⁹ “Central African Republic: IRIN background brief”, at www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/Hornet/irin_61198.html

⁴⁹⁰ The Secretary-General named special representatives for all the current UN Missions in Africa – MONUC, MINURSO and UNMEE. They are Ambassadors Amos Namanga Ngongi, William Lacy Swing, and Legwaila Joseph Legwaila respectively. See <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml>

confirms the fact that the UN has clearly moved beyond classic peacekeeping, in response to the demands of the times.

Like its predecessor MINURCA played a significant role in restoring stability and security in the CAR, as well as political dialogue among the key players. The progress achieved by MINURCA, with the support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, helped revive the economy. In July 1998, for example, the Executive Board of the IMF approved an Extended Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) with the aim of kick-starting the economy following the Bangui Agreements.⁴⁹¹

In sum, MINURCA created the enabling environment for the conduct of peaceful legislative elections in November/December 1998. In addition, it played a crucial role in the staging of the September 1999 presidential elections, which were won by the incumbent, President Patasse.

From the point of view of strategy, it is evident from the preceding discussion that, in confronting the situation in the CAR, France and regional leaders responded to the warning signals coming out of Bangui in a timely manner by designing the right mix of strategies to deal with the crisis. They began with political diplomacy and followed that with military strategies – French peace enforcement, a regional peacekeeping force and eventually a United Nations peacekeeping force.

Diplomatic strategies to prevent the conflict from escalating began with an initiative by regional leaders, which produced a peace plan under which a fifteen-day truce was brokered. This initial diplomatic break-through was key to paving the way for other initiatives aimed at finding a political settlement to the crisis.

⁴⁹¹ *World Bank Report No. 27447* at www.worldbank.org.

One of the most important outcomes of this initiative was a January 1997 national dialogue, which brought together not only the two factions, but also all stakeholders in the CAR. This conference produced the Bangui Accords referred to earlier. The Accords clearly defined the “roadmap” to peace for the CAR: they guaranteed an end to mutinies; produced a government of national unity and brought in African peacekeepers (MISAB) to take over from the French.

This diplomatic initiative was followed by a military strategy. It should be noted, however, that even before the diplomatic initiative was concluded, there was the need for military force on the ground to maintain law and order. France provided this. France was therefore doing peace enforcement at that stage of the crisis since there was no peace agreement to monitor. France stayed on the ground until all elements of the Bangui Accords were implemented.

As noted already, one of the key provisions of the Accords was the replacement of French troops with MISAB. France withdrew its peace enforcement forces from Bangui when MISAB was deployed in February 1997, just a month after the Bangui Accords. France, however, continued to provide logistical and financial support so as to ensure that the peace process was not disrupted. MISAB had a confusing mandate – peacekeeping and peace enforcement all at once. The force, however, discharged its duties professionally.

MISAB was on the ground for a little over one year, from February 1997 to April 1998. Within that space of time, the force succeeded in ensuring that the crisis did not escalate nor spread beyond the capital, Bangui. Like the initial diplomatic initiative, the presence of MISAB on the ground paved the way for a March 1998 second national

reconciliation conference leading to the adoption of the National Reconciliation Pact – another “roadmap” to peace in the CAR.

As indicated already, even though France no longer had troops on the ground in the CAR, it provided the crucial financial backing needed to keep MISAB on the ground. MISAB was forced to close down its operations in the CAR when France signaled her unwillingness to continue to fund the operation. To consolidate the gains made by MISAB, Secretary-General Annan called for the deployment of a UN mission. This was very strategic since the situation in the CAR was still very fragile at the time. In making his case to the Security Council, Annan forcefully argued that the security of the CAR was linked to the security of the entire sub-region and for that matter there was the need to ensure that the situation in the CAR did not deteriorate once MISAB pulled out.

The Council agreed with Annan’s proposition and, in March 1998, just as MISAB was winding up its activities, another peacekeeping mission, MINURCA, was being deployed. The military strategy in the CAR was a kind of “relay” moving from a unilateral force, to a regional and then on to a multi-national force under the auspices of the UN.

Indeed, France, regional leaders and the UN ensured that there was no “gaping hole” in the implementation of the Bangui Accords. From the perspective of preventing the escalation of the crisis, one could argue that the actors properly coordinated their strategies. Upon deployment, MINURCA’s mandate was largely to continue the work that MISAB had started. But, in addition to that, the mission got involved in the training of the security forces and in the elections – classic second generation peacekeeping.

Aside from getting the strategy right, the timing of the intervention in the CAR was just right. Both France and regional leaders got involved in the crisis at a time when it was in the pre-crisis stage. The crisis started in April 1996 and, by December 1996, diplomatic efforts were underway to find a political settlement. France and La Francophonie played a crucial role and responded to calls from both President Patasse and influential citizens of the CAR. It will be recalled that at the Ouagadougou summit of December 1996, the political opposition and a former CAR Prime Minister urged francophone leaders to intervene in the crisis. This was in addition to the formal request by President Patasse.

For a number of reasons, the timing of the intervention was fruitful. First, regional leaders learnt from the experience of Liberia that the earlier they got involved, the better. In Liberia, there was regional intervention but the timing was wrong so many opportunities were missed. Second, there were only two factions to deal with, so the task of mediators was clearly carved out. Third, and most importantly, the involvement of France probably underscored the seriousness of the initiative. Given that France had forces stationed in Bangui, there was the possibility of the use of force if diplomatic initiatives failed to produce the desired results.

As I noted earlier, France was determined to improve its image in Francophone Africa and one of the most important things she did in this regard was to deploy troops on the ground to stabilize the situation whilst regional leaders worked towards a political situation. While France played an active role, she wisely took the “back seat” in the diplomatic effort and left African leaders to craft their own solution to the problem. This

was probably to avoid a situation where any solution reached would be perceived as being imposed by a former colonial power.⁴⁹²

Regional leaders ensured that the mutinous soldiers and the government found a compromise solution to their differences in a timely manner; while this was being worked out, they ensured that the security situation did not deteriorate by adopting the right set of strategies.

II: Evaluation of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. There is a relationship between early warning and conflict prevention such that the earlier the warning, the better the outcome. More specifically, it is postulated that if early warning is to have a positive impact on the outcome of preventive efforts:

H1a. there has to be effective indicators, methods, and information systems for identifying latent conflicts

H1b. the information gathering system has to be well coordinated

H1c. the strengths of the various information gatherers should be harnessed so that information could be gathered in the quickest way possible

H1d. the information gathered has to be properly analyzed and packaged for policy makers

As is evident from the preceding discussions, the intervention in CAR was very well coordinated between France, regional leaders and the UN. The CAR benefited from the spirit of “La Francophonie”, with regional leaders coming together with France to make sure that CAR did not descend into chaos. Even though there was no security apparatus in place to handle the crisis, regional leaders managed to handle the crisis in a way that produced the best outcome under the circumstances.

According to Hypothesis 1a, if early warning is to have an impact on the outcome of preventive efforts, there have to be effective indicators, methods, and information

⁴⁹² This is currently the case with Cote d’Ivoire. At the January 2003 peace talks at which a deal was crafted, many in Cote d’Ivoire think that it was a deal imposed by France and favoring the rebels.....

systems for identifying latent conflicts. Neither France nor regional leaders had an institutionalized system in place for collecting and analyzing early warning information, yet, they took warning signals coming out of Bangui seriously and acted quickly on those signals to prevent escalation. The preceding analysis provides partial support for this hypothesis.

France and regional leaders took on the task of managing the crisis in the CAR at their December 1996 Summit in Burkina Faso, at the request of concerned citizens of the CAR as well as President Patasse. Even without any formal structure in place, regional leaders were able to set in motion a diplomatic, and eventually a military process to handle the crisis. Regional leaders succeeded in their effort mainly because of the support and leadership provided by the French.

Evidence from the case study does not provide any support for hypothesis 1b, which places emphasis on coordination of information gathering for effective prevention. As noted a number of times already, before mounting the intervention in the CAR regional leaders did not have any institution devoted to collecting and analyzing warning signals. They were simply responding to events developing out of Bangui. It is possible that France had some fore-knowledge of the crisis, given that it had troops on the ground in the CAR. The crisis started in May 1996 and, after the second rebellion, France quickly moved in to prevent the situation in Bangui from deteriorating; regional leaders got involved after the third rebellion. What made the intervention successful was the fact that the crisis was not an uprising led by a rebel movement – it was a mutiny from some elements of the military. As a result, even six months after the first rebellion, when

diplomatic initiatives started, the crisis was still at the pre-crisis stage and the well-coordinated intervention helped prevent escalation.

Since there was no “real” information gathering and analysis, hypotheses 1c and 1d are not applicable.

Hypothesis 2. There is a relationship between timing and conflict prevention such that if conflict has to be prevented, third parties have to intervene at the pre-violence stage of conflict

The importance of timing in conflict prevention cannot be over-emphasized. When third parties intervene, the effectiveness of their strategies depends largely on the timing of their intervention. The intervention in the CAR was mounted at a time when the crisis was still manageable, at a time when the positions of the factions was ‘malleable’. The case study thus, supports this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3. There is a relationship between timing and strategy that affects outcome, such that:

- H3a. intervention at pre-violence stage with economic and political strategy is likely to result in successful conflict prevention
- H3b. intervention at the pre-violence stage with a military strategy is likely to result in limited or short-term success but failure in the long run
- H3c. intervention beyond the pre-violence stage with political, economic and military strategies is likely to produce a failed outcome

Even though the intervention in the CAR occurred at the pre-violence stage, the strategy employed was largely diplomatic, with limited economic diplomacy. According to the hypothesis, intervention beyond the pre-violence stage with a mix of political, economic and military strategies is likely to produce a failed outcome.

It will be recalled that, after the second rebellion, France offered to help the government pay the salary arrears of the soldiers – one of the key demands that triggered the rebellions. But, as it turned out, this economic diplomacy was not enough to get the soldiers to lay down their arms. After the third rebellion, regional leaders aggressively pursued diplomatic initiatives to complement this economic diplomacy that was undertaken with the support of France. The diplomatic efforts produced the Bangui Accords and set the CAR on the course to peace. This is in keeping with hypothesis 3a.

According to hypothesis 3b, intervention at the pre-violence stage with a military strategy is likely to result in limited or short-term success, but failure in the long run. True, there was a military intervention in the CAR, but that was in addition to the diplomatic initiatives that were put in place as well as the limited economic diplomacy. The military strategy started with France's peace enforcement, then the regional peacekeeping mission and eventually the multi-national peacekeeping initiative under the aegis of the UN.

Since the intervention in the CAR did not go beyond the pre-crisis stage, according to our analysis, there is no evidence to evaluate hypothesis 3c.

Hypothesis 4. There is a relationship between timing and strategy that affects outcome, such that:

H4a. mixed strategies are likely to produce a better outcome

H4b. single strategies are likely to produce a poor outcome

In Chapter One, it was indicated that, in general, third parties can use three strategies in dealing with a crisis - political, economic and military – and, most of the time, these

are applied in tandem and not in isolation. During the intervention in the CAR, three strategies – economic (limited), diplomatic and military – were indeed applied in tandem.

When regional leaders, with the support of France, set out to find a solution to the crisis in the CAR, they made sure that they avoided the usual tendency to use force to seek a lasting solution. They paid more attention to finding a political settlement; this is evident from the two National Reconciliation talks that were held to try to bring about reconciliation in the CAR. However, whilst focusing on a political settlement, there was an effort to ensure that violent hostilities were kept in check. This necessitated the presence of a peacekeeping mission during the entire period that third parties were involved in the crisis. There was thus a mix of strategies and this produced the intended outcome – preventing escalation of the crisis.

There is no evidence to evaluate hypothesis 4b since, right from the beginning, third parties resorted to a mix of strategies. It is therefore difficult to tell what the outcome would have been if they had used a single strategy.

Hypothesis 5. The chances for preventing conflict are better if there is a close collaboration between the UN/International community and regional, sub-regional and local organizations.

It is evident from the analysis of the case study that regional leaders could not have prevented the crisis in the CAR without the support, first of France, and then of the UN. The CAR benefited immensely from the presence of French troops in Bangui and France was quick to put the troops to work to ensure that the crisis did not escalate. As I indicated already, France was probably trying to rescue her image in francophone Africa, so that there was no repetition of Rwanda. Consequently, she stayed the course until the situation was stable enough.

There was also a close collaboration between regional leaders and the UN. The UN kept a constant watch over the situation in the CAR, with the Secretary General constantly updating the Security Council. When France decided to withdraw her financial support to MISAB in April 1998, the UN moved quickly to ensure that no vacuum was created. This was based on the belief that, even though there was peace in the CAR at the time, the situation was still fragile and there was the need to put in place an international force to help consolidate the achievements of MISAB. The evidence from the case thus provides support for this hypothesis.

III: Conclusions and Key Findings

Like the case of Lesotho, the Central African Republic is yet another instance where efforts were taken to prevent conflict. Unlike Lesotho, however, in this case conflict prevention was a joint effort, first between France and a regional coalition, and then eventually between the coalition and the United Nations.

It is important to underscore the key role that France played at the critical stage of the conflict. In fact, it is evident from the discussion that without early French intervention and support the conflict would have escalated. But the French intervention was motivated more by self-interest than humanitarian concerns. The important lesson here is that former colonial powers, because of their continued interest in their former colonies, can sometimes play a leading role in conflict prevention.

The early intervention by France paved the way for a regional coalition to engage in diplomatic efforts and eventually to deploy a peacekeeping force. Unlike the case of Liberia, there was unity among the countries that intervened in the Central African Republic and that probably accounted for their success. The lesson here is that it is not

enough to have a regional organization engaged in a crisis. What is more important is the need for members of the regional body, or coalition in this case, to work towards one single objective. A fractured coalition, like ECOWAS in Liberia, can sometimes be counter-productive.

Again, like in the case of Lesotho, this case confirms the belief that sometimes diplomacy alone is not enough to prevent conflicts. It should be backed by the threat to use force, and the actual use of force when diplomacy fails.

In fact, a combination of force and diplomacy had significantly helped put the CAR on the course to normal democratic politics, but not without problems. Since the 1996 rebellions and subsequent interventions, the country continued to have a chequered history. In March 2003, a former rebel leader, Francois Bozize overthrew President Patasse in a coup. Bozize, fearing isolation from the international community, quickly put the country on a course to multi-party elections. This started with a referendum in December 2004 during which the country's new constitution was approved. This was followed by Presidential and Parliamentary elections in March 2005 in which Bozize was favored to win.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE CONFLICT PREVENTION IN AFRICA

I began this thesis by arguing that, even though Africa seems to be the most violent continent in the world in terms of its share of the number of intra-state conflicts, conflict prevention efforts do not match the scale and levels of destruction on the continent. If, as Ted Gurr and his colleagues have predicted, Africa, as well as other poverty-stricken non-democratic areas around the globe, will continue to experience serious warfare in the future, then conflict prevention efforts have to be sharpened and focused.

This thesis focused on the role that regional organizations can play in conflict prevention vis-à-vis the role of the international community. Admittedly, preventing conflict presents monumental challenges, but as this thesis has demonstrated through case studies, where there is political will and leadership, it is possible to surmount these difficulties.

To reiterate, the thesis examined two sets of cases. Using the comparative method of “most similar systems”, the case set was made up of failed and (qualified) successful cases of prevention.⁴⁹³ The first set - failed cases - are Rwanda and Liberia/Sierra Leone, whilst the second set - (qualified) successful cases were Lesotho and the Central African Republic. These cases differ in terms of outcome, but are similar in many respects: they are all African countries; all were colonized by European powers; all are

⁴⁹³ I define “failed prevention” as a situation in which there was abundant warning but no effort to stop the escalation of the conflict. In such a situation, there is both diplomatic and military action but at a time when the conflict has moved beyond the pre-violence stage. The result is usually a humanitarian catastrophe which results in the loss of lives and property in the country concerned. “Qualified successful prevention” is defined as a situation in which efforts were made to respond to warning signals. Such efforts – political and military succeed in preventing the escalation of violence but not without some casualties. The base line for the distinction between success and failure is whether the conflict was contained within the initial stage without violence.

post-Cold War conflicts and have similar economic and political systems; all are less developed; and above all, all of them have similar socio-cultural characteristics, with at least two or more ethnic groups. The important question that emerges from the cases examined in this thesis is why conflict prevention failed in Rwanda and Liberia but not in Lesotho and the Central African Republic?

In Rwanda, for many decades, there was a series of warning signals about an impending conflict, if not genocide. But these warning signals were either misunderstood or simply ignored. The cost of doing nothing was the millions of Rwandese who were slaughtered during the April 1994 genocide. As I noted in the Rwandan chapter, it is important to understand what happened in Rwanda not because there has never been anything like it since the Holocaust, but because it shows how the international community is still reactive and often unprepared to confront atrocities that ridicule the noble ideals for which the United Nations was formed.

The evidence from the analysis of the Rwandan case points to a number of interesting conclusions. First, it is not automatic that warning signals will always provoke a response, no matter how atrocious the signals are. The lesson here is that, while waiting for systematic approach to early warning to be developed, Rwanda also highlighted what we know already. Sometimes diplomacy has to be backed by the credible threat of force and the international community should not shy away from applying force if necessary. In the days leading up to the genocide, UNAMIR was severely handicapped by the decision of the UN not to boost its capacity and mandate, especially to enable it to use force to stop the Hutu extremists. Finally, Rwanda has taught the international community that every effort should be made to prevent countries that have ethnic

affinities with most of their neighbours from slipping into civil war and genocide, because such situations have profound destabilizing regional repercussions. The ghost of Rwanda continues to haunt the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

Liberia is yet another case of failure in conflict prevention. Unlike Rwanda, however, Liberia saw a flurry of regional diplomatic activity led by ECOWAS. Initially, Liberia signalled a new direction in the diplomacy of managing conflicts in Africa since it was the first time in the post-Cold War era that a regional organization took a bold initiative to mount an intervention solely directed by Africans. But for various reasons (as discussed in the Liberia chapter), laudable as the ECOWAS initiative was, it could not prevent Liberia's descent into chaos. To be sure, ECOWAS was able to bring the Liberia situation under control, at least to avert another Rwanda. What ECOWAS could not do was to prevent the conflict. And this was mainly due to the organization's choice of strategies, the timing of its intervention, as well as questions about legitimacy (Abacha was then a military ruler in Nigeria).

One clear shortcoming of ECOWAS was that the organization's lack of experience in multilateral diplomacy weighed heavily in its decisions about timing and strategy, as well as its ability to take a clear stand – either for peacekeeping or peace-enforcement. Swinging between the two strategies contradicted ECOWAS' eagerness to project an impartial image, leading to a perception, at least on the part of the NPFL that ECOWAS was in Liberia not as an honest and impartial mediator but to support Samuel Doe and prevent Charles Taylor from coming to power. In the end, ECOWAS was confronted with a stalemate and spent the next seven years in Liberia trying to manage a conflict it could have prevented.

One important lesson from the ECOWAS experience in Liberia, particularly for other African regional organizations, is that intervening in a civil war is not an easy task especially for one without any experience in multilateral diplomacy. ECOWAS had two choices: (1) mount a full scale peace enforcement mission with massive force to rein in Taylor and his forces; and/or (2) negotiate a quick end to the crisis by paying serious attention to Taylor's demands and the risk that he posed to peace in Liberia.

Furthermore, the Liberian experience shows that, whilst regional organizations, particularly in Africa, have an important role to play in conflict prevention, success will continue to elude them if they lack the capacity, resources and appropriate professional standards to mount peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations. Most countries in West Africa are poor and could not effectively participate in the Liberian mission leaving the burden to Nigeria. That further complicated the already difficult situation. Nigeria's role was a "double-edged" sword. On the one hand, it was crucial in getting the intervention off the ground. On the other hand, the leadership struggle pitched Nigeria against Cote d'Ivoire as well as against Taylor and his NPFL, who perceived Nigeria to be sympathetic to Samuel Doe.

Whilst Rwanda and Liberia are symptomatic of what can go wrong with conflict prevention efforts in Africa, Lesotho and the Central African Republic were a clear demonstration of the fact that it is possible to contain or minimize conflict in Africa.

In Lesotho, the timely intervention of SADC under the leadership of South Africa helped prevent the disintegration of the mountain kingdom. Like ECOWAS, SADC did not have any experience in the diplomacy of intervening in conflict situations. One difference, however, was the fact that South Africa enjoys undisputed leadership in the

region so its authority was unchallenged. Besides, South Africa was realistic about handling the crisis in Lesotho – it did not pretend to be doing peacekeeping in a situation where there was no peace to keep. Once diplomacy was not making any headway, South Africa was quick to use force to bring the situation under control. As I noted in the discussion of the Lesotho case, SADC's intervention in Lesotho generated a lot of controversy, mainly due to the role of South Africa and its use of force. There were problems with the level of authorization, composition and mandate of the intervention force. But in the final analysis, it was the use of force right from the beginning that made the difference between conflict prevention and crisis management in Lesotho.

SADC managed to end hostilities in Lesotho and bring the country back from the brink. Probably the most successful intervention by an African regional organization, SADC's efforts in Lesotho stand out for two important reasons. First, the organization managed to prevent the 1998 conflict from escalating. Second, it addressed the principal root of the conflict - the persistent tension between the military and the monarchy on the one side and the ruling elite on the other - through the use of force. In fact, SADC's intervention and its subsequent success supports the claims made by Carment and Harvey in their work on Kosovo that it is possible to use force to prevent conflict. It should be noted, however, that, such an effort has to be complemented by strategies that seek to create long-term solutions to the conflict. South Africa's military might continues to serve as a deterrent to conflict in Lesotho. The looming possibility of another intervention has kept the elites in check. Five years after *Operation Boleas*, Lesotho enjoys relative political stability. In May 2002, elections were held in Lesotho. The BNP, together with other opposition parties, contested the results but the protest was civil

and all opposition members eventually took up their seats in the national parliament in June 2002.⁴⁹⁴ In a country with a history of persistent disputes over election results, what happened in 2002 is a clear indication that Lesotho is on a path to consolidating its peace gains.

Lesotho has proved that regional organizations in Africa are slowly developing the capacity to keep peace in their backyard. Unlike all the other cases analyzed in this thesis, which involved interventions from both regional and international organizations, Lesotho was simply a SADC initiative. It bears noting that even regional initiatives, require a key lead country if the intervention is to succeed.

Again, in Lesotho, the role that national interest plays in intervention was glaringly displayed by South Africa. South Africa, and in fact the entire SADC, was concerned about the negative impact of the crisis in Lesotho on the entire region. In the case of South Africa in particular, it had specific interests like the Katsie water project and the likely flow of refugees into South Africa. One could argue that these two factors, rather than the desire to stabilize Lesotho were the principal driving forces that motivated South Africa to take decisive action in Lesotho. The challenge for conflict prevention therefore is finding the way out in situations where there are no national interests at stake, particularly for leading states that possess the capacity to intervene.

Central African Republic, as already discussed, is one of the few cases of successful prevention in Africa. Here unlike the case of Lesotho, a coalition of countries in the region and not a regional organization like SADC played a key role in preventing the escalation of violence. Furthermore, France, a former colonial power, not a leading

⁴⁹⁴ See for example "Lesotho Premier Sworn in", *BBC News*, June 5, 2002 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2025462.stm>.

country in the region, provided the needed leadership and logistical support to ensure the success of the mission. The Central African Republic significantly differs from Lesotho because not only was there cooperation between France and a regional coalition, but also in the latter stages of the intervention, the United Nations played a key role in consolidating the gains achieved by France and the regional coalition. The United Nations intervention, even though late in coming, guaranteed peaceful co-existence between the factions and ensured that there was no recurrence of violence, a common phenomenon in the immediate aftermath of most peace settlements.

It is important to note that the role of France in the Central African Republic was critical in the success of prevention efforts. In fact, without early French intervention and support, the conflict would have escalated. But, as is evident from the discussion, Paris was motivated more by self-interest than humanitarian concerns. From a policy perspective, the lesson here is the central role that former colonial powers can play in conflict prevention in Africa. Both France and Britain, have at various times in the last four years, intervened in their former colonies. In September 2002, France played a key role in preventing the escalation of the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. In 2000, British troops also played a key role in Sierra Leone by deploying a very effective peace-enforcement force, which succeeded in preventing the further disintegration of Sierra Leone, brought the RUF under control and got the latter back to the negotiating table.

One could argue that it was the early French intervention that created the necessary conditions for regional countries to organize and strategize on how to handle the situation. Timing was critical. France intervened at an opportune moment, when regional countries were simply not in any position to take decisive action. And when

they eventually intervened, they were united in their desire to bring peace to the Central African Republic - a stark difference from the situation in Liberia - where there were very deep divisions between ECOWAS member states.

The lesson here is that it is not enough to have a regional organization engaged in a crisis. What is more important is the need for members of the regional body, or coalition, in this case, to work towards one single objective. A fractured coalition, like the case of ECOWAS in Liberia, can sometimes be counter-productive.

Again, as in the case of Lesotho, this case confirms the belief that sometimes diplomacy alone is not enough to prevent conflicts. It should be backed by the credible threat of force, and the actual use of force, when diplomacy fails.

To sum up, I have argued in this thesis that conflict prevention is dependent on early warning, good timing, the right tools and effective strategies (political will, peace enforcement, peacekeeping, etc). In the final section of this paper I will suggest some policy implications resulting from my analysis. I will prefix my suggestions by noting that there is no single way to achieve policy effectiveness in conflict prevention. Rather, there are several approaches that help, and can be used in parallel.

Policy Prescriptions

My conclusions point to areas for further research on the central question of why conflict prevention has not been a favoured policy choice in handling of conflicts in Africa. Meanwhile, the multi-faceted dimensions of the cases of both success and failure discussed in this thesis hold insightful implications for policy making in conflict prevention. A general advisory note is that the outbreak and escalation of open hostilities

in some cases (including cases not discussed in this thesis) is dependent on several interacting factors. As a result, policy analysts and policy makers who rely on “one-dimensional ‘magic bullet’ remedies” are very unlikely to succeed.

With the risk of neglecting my own precautionary note that there are no “one-dimensional ‘magic bullet’ remedies” to conflict prevention, I will provide general suggestions in the following sections. I will then apply my general suggestions to the cases discussed in this thesis.

First and foremost, deliberate efforts have to be engaged to surmount the lack of a systematic approach to risk assessment. Currently, there is no system for anticipating the trajectory from crisis to conflict. Sure, there are lots of lofty generalizations vying for attention but a comprehensive model is yet to emerge. I think that there should be a more systematic risk assessment system to generate information to enable analysts distinguishes between different types of conflicts. In particular, the definitions of conflict should be clear and accurate. In short, early warning analysis should move beyond anecdote and narrative to more rigorous analysis of patterns based on predetermined early warning scales. Researchers and policy analysts can work together using accelerators, triggers, and de-accelerators in combination with the conflict cycle to develop an alert system.

Secondly, too often researchers argue that it is the dearth of political will rather than the absence of clear signals that impedes conflict prevention. I acknowledged this impediment in this thesis. But Gurr and Harff have demonstrated the lack of political will may in fact be a function of the absence of systematic early warning systems. Many of the efforts to mobilize political will have been incited by activist NGOs and IGOs. If

more precise measures were available, perhaps it will be easier to jolt governments into action. The excuse for inaction will have been eliminated. In response to this challenge, I suggest that researchers and policy analysts inculcate prospective and retrospective information to improve the techniques for forecasting. This should be complemented with inputs through field monitoring, regional expert assessment, and monitoring through structural quantitative variables.

In addition, the issue of political will is complicated by the need for the international community to respect the “sovereignty” of states. But as the ICISS report suggests, where sovereign states are unwilling or unable to protect their citizens that responsibility must be borne by the broader international community of states. In the short-term, this creates a window of opportunity for the international community to get around the issue of sovereignty.

Admittedly, this will not be an easy task to accomplish. The recommendation of ICISS is paradoxical. The suggestion to circumvent sovereignty is a deterrent to already diminished levels of political will. Most states in Africa that form the regional unions discussed in this thesis possess similar conflict prone characteristics. As a result, these states will be wary of ignoring the sovereignty of other states because of the fear of a boomerang effect (because those who live in glass houses are wary of stone throwing). To this extent, the ICISS proposal may rightly be classified as idealistic. Fortunately, some of the leading states in the African Union, ECOWAS, and SADC are emerging democracies. Overtime, the circumspection associated with overriding sovereign domains to prevent looming catastrophes may elapse. This points to the desirability of long-term measures; the most important of which is the encouragement of democratic governance.

In the short term, the international community (western industrialized states) led by the UN will have to assume leadership until regional groups are fully willing and equipped to tackle these issues.

Furthermore, the concept of timing and the mutually hurting stalemate is useful but its implementation remains precarious. The conditions for ripeness, as Zartman acknowledges, include a perceptual event and a way out. At the same time ripe timing is only a condition, necessary but not sufficient for early warning. This creates some problems. First, increased pain sometimes only increases resistance and hardens disputants. Also, conflict escalation includes other aspects of conflict behaviour. By implication, the concept is too dependent on conflict. Finally, the theory addresses the opening of negotiations, which has severe implications for the absence of ripeness. In short, it is nearly impossible to establish a specific “tipping point.” On the contrary, policy practitioners insist timing and ripeness is a rear-view mirror and not a forward-looking tool. This leaves the determination of the right time to a random, cherry picking moment.

There are no easy solutions to timing. As mentioned already in this thesis, sometimes practitioners of conflict prevention recognize a ripe moment only in retrospect (timing as rear view mirror). Besides, timing and ripe moments are useful only when conflict has started whereas this thesis is looking at preventing the onset of hostilities. However, this does not diminish the relevance of ‘ripe timing’ to early warning. The solution may lie in the willingness and sustained commitment of experts and researchers to monitoring conflict prone states and measuring their observations against predetermined scales. In some cases, the *modus operandi* of the cultivator (Lederach, 2003), rather than the

harvester (Zartman 1998) will be more effective. Practitioners and experts will have to devote greater levels of respect for and connection to the context of potential violence. In short, a criterion for authenticity and intimate knowledge, rather than a distant ivory tower acquaintance, may provide the gateway to successful early warning.

I will now demonstrate how these general suggestions could have made a difference in the cases discussed in this paper.

Relevance of Policy Prescriptions to Case Studies

Rwanda and Liberia illustrate failure at conflict prevention. Rwanda highlights the lack of political will from the international community. By improving early warning systems as suggested above the international community will have no excuse to respond to future looming dangers. Also, regional efforts of the type initiated by ECOWAS in Liberia bring to light a composite of problems, including poor timing, organization and mandate, and misperception that missteps in any of these factors can send to the contending parties. In response, experts and practitioners of conflict prevention should approach the timing with both a theoretical and practical mindset. In order to activate conflict prevention interventions there should be detailed case-by-case analysis. The findings and conclusions of each analysis should be matched against predetermined scales and alert levels.

The effectiveness of regional hegemonic leadership is demonstrated by South Africa. But as noted already, South Africa had to address itself to legitimacy issues, composition of the intervention, and the right mandate. Nonetheless, the role of South Africa was key in providing leadership and in demonstrating that where there is political will,

intervention at the opportune moment in the conflict cycle can make a difference between conflict and peace.

From the above analysis, the obvious question is what does all this mean for conflict prevention in Africa and what are the implications for future research?

As is evident from the discussion throughout the thesis, there is no shortage of early warning modules. A number of issues deserve further attention. Among them is how existing frameworks for risk assessment may be fine-tuned to make them more reliable. And how these modules can be developed such that they attract the attention of 'big powers' who have both the resources and capacity to prevent the escalation of conflict. Lastly, this discussion points to how existing modules can be integrated to complement each other and to strengthen and eliminate their inherent weaknesses.

Another area of further research is timing. Zartman's theory of ripeness and mutually hurting stalemate certainly need a revisit, particularly in the context of conflict prevention. A number of questions still need to be addressed: how can intervenors determine the best moment at which to intervene, particularly in situations where there are no reliable pointers? How can timing and ripeness be turned into forward-looking tools?

Furthermore, collaboration between the UN and regional organizations needs to be further examined since that partnership holds a lot of promise for conflict prevention. This is based on the belief that effective conflict prevention requires coordination and coherence among a myriad of actors. As is evident from the discussion in the case studies, there is a role for regional and sub-regional organizations in conflict prevention. But as the case of Liberia demonstrates, for a number of reasons, sometimes regional

organizations can be victims of their own determination. Recognizing the need for such a partnership, as recently as July 20, 2004, the Security Council organized a day-long meeting to find out the best ways by which the UN can collaborate with regional organizations to maximize efficiency in stabilization processes.⁴⁹⁵ The UN Secretary-General aptly described this policy as ‘strategic partnerships’ for future challenges. Academics and researchers have to seize the opportunity and come up with effective and systematic methods to guide the international community on how best to make such a partnership effective and long lasting.

In a nutshell, intervention to prevent conflict must be early, engaged and decisive but based on systematic analysis. Effective and conscious prevention that not only ‘extinguishes fire’ but brings about long-lasting peace, requires thorough analysis and carefully designed strategy built on a clear understanding of the situation on the ground. Warning signals of unrest and discrimination must be met timely and wisely. While the world awaits the development of a state-of-the-art formula for conflict prevention, there is a moral obligation to prevent further deaths, like the current unfolding catastrophe in Darfur, Sudan.

⁴⁹⁵ UN Security Council, *SC/8153*, July 20, 2004 at www.un.org

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