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David R. Smock, Chester A. Crocker, eds. *African Conflict Resolution: The U.S. Role in Peacemaking.* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995. vi + 163 pp. $14.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-878379-00-9.

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The essays in this relatively slim volume were first offered at a September 1994 conference at the United States Institute of Peace, an independent, federally funded think tank located in downtown Washington, D.C. The essays may be useful for anyone focused on the need for the United States to encourage Africans to take a larger role in bringing stability to their continent. One has the impression that the dark shadows of Somalia and Rwanda weighed heavily on the conference proceedings; the conference evidently did not include anyone willing to speak to potential U.S. military roles in Africa.

In fact, the conference's underlying and unstated premise was based on the political wisdom of the moment–that is, to do everything short of U.S. military intervention to help the afflicted African continent. The approach reflects what one might call the "reluctant humanitarian model": there is an enormous problem here that requires a significant solution, but we are uncertain of our ability or even our resolve to undertake the necessary measures to find solutions to the problem. Given the emotional polemic that was sparked by the October 1993 deaths of U.S. military personnel in Mogadishu, and the horror of the genocide in Rwanda, one wonders just how much practical contemplation of peacekeeping issues has been possible within the confines of the Beltway in the past three years.

In the nine essays, a diverse collection of authors representing both the scholarly world and government civilian practitioners are represented. As an introduction, USIP African activities coordinator David Smock outlines the following conference goals: (1) to assess what the United States has learned from its African peacemaking efforts; (2) to gauge the capacity of Africa to undertake a more significant role in peacemaking on the continent; (3) to assess what outsiders might provide to facilitate African peacekeeping; and (4) to look into the U.S. role in African conflict resolution. Most of the book is devoted to item (2) in the list of conference goals. Item (3) receives some meaningful attention, while the first and last items receive only the most cursory treatment.

In his introduction, Smock advances uncritically the high points of the misleading conventional wisdom about the Somalia intervention, that is, nation-building in Somalia ran afoul of an "extraordinarily complex ... sociopolitical situation that few outsiders comprehended"; the "wrong turn" caused by becoming "fixated on arresting ... Aideed"; and, of course, he reminds us of President Clinton's rather odd assertion (for the leader of one of the five permanent veto-carrying member states of the UN Security Council) that "the UN must learn to say no."

These opening assertions did not bode well for fulfilling the first objective of the conference, to assess what

the United States has learned about peace operations, but they appear to be accepted by most, though not all, of the presenters at the conference. Some dissenters were experts on Somalia, or at least on similar failing states. Others contributed to the development of an operation that seriously lacked political focus, and which, predictably, broke down after the departure of the U.S. force.

The reviewer should take a moment to note that he is not a detached student of the African peacemaking phenomenon. In a diplomatic career of over thirty-six years, he spent most of it in African affairs, with nearly fifteen years residency on the continent. As the second-in-command of the U.S. Liaison Office during March-June 1993, and the person in charge of the U.S. diplomatic mission on 5 June 1993, when the Pakistani soldiers were shamelessly ambushed while carrying out their humanitarian duties, the reviewer has spent most of the succeeding period in the study of items (1) and (4) of Smock's list of objectives, and is disappointed that more substance related to those matters does not appear in the book.

The opening essay, "The African State as Political Refugee," provides Ali Mazrui, in his usual compelling and lyrical fashion, an opportunity to present again his views on the nature of the African state. The colonial heritage is ritually blamed for most ills of modern African society and government. He describes eight different forms of intervention, which range from unilateral by a neighbor (with the blessing of a regional organization) to the establishment of a Pan-African peacekeeping force, not indicating if he finds any of them acceptable. He concludes with the suggestion that perhaps the disintegration of governmental structures around the continent signifies a "high risk rebellion…against the state per se as a mode of governance." One wonders about the reactions on the Horn of Africa to his apparently serious proposition that "places like Somaliland and Ethiopia may be retreating towards a pre-state utopia, as the twentieth century brings its colonial curtain down."

A sensible practitioner's view of the problems of the African continent is provided in "The African Role in Conflict Management and Resolution," by B. A. Kiplagat, a retired Kenyan ambassador (to Britain and France) and a key player in mediation efforts in Mozambique. Much closer to the realities of Africa than the preceding speaker, Kiplagat provides a list of danger signals of imminent national chaos, which has practical value for states about to fall over the edge. His overview of African conflict management resolution efforts is very useful. He calls for a comprehensive and integrated peacekeeping strategy, which some might take as implied criticism of the initial U.S. foray into Somalia. His essay is wise and useful; it is unfortunate that he does not provide more details on what a comprehensive and integrated approach might include.

Donald Rothchild's presentation, "The US Role in Managing African Conflicts: Lessons from the Past," represents the single essay in the collection that attempts to draw realistic conclusions from the U.S. peacekeeping experience. He reviews U.S. efforts as facilitator of African peace accords and suggests the necessary direct and indirect tools that can be brought to bear in such situations. The reviewer found particularly compelling Rothchild's arguments in favor of "institutionalizing uncertainty"– that is, getting the contenders to accept the possibility of political change. In the reviewer's view, the most effective means of restoring political order in a troubled state is to "disarm" the warlords through the establishment of a competing dynamic in which the warlord's followers will see greater value in joining the process than in continuing their insurgency against public order. In his essay, Rothchild suggests several techniques that peacekeeping practitioners would do well to study.

A different perspective on peacekeeping is provided in the essay: "A Diplomatic Perspective on African Conflict Resolution," by Ambassador Robert Oakley. He looks at the mediation efforts which were so decisive in Namibia and Angola and determines that diplomacy has great value in such enterprises. In his brief discussion of the Somalia intervention, in which he played such a visible part, Ambassador Oakley continues to separate the U.S.-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF) period, in which he was directly involved, from the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) phase that followed. His approach is misleading in the sense that the strategy for the international intervention in Somalia and the mandates that provided authorization for the actions taken there (principally UN Security Council Resolutions 794, for UNITAF, and 814 for UNOSOM) were developed by the same people in the Pentagon, largely under the same leadership, although pursued by separate U.S. administrations.

Most people now acknowledge that Somalia was a humanitarian disaster wrapped around a situation of political bankruptcy. It is misleading and unhelpful for advancing the cause of conflict resolution to specify the components of a single disaster and to assign blame for undertaking different assignments. Oakley is wrong to assert that, after his departure, UNOSOM "embarked on

a more intrusive approach to political reconciliation, and moved into first political and then military confrontation with…General Aideed." The Bush administration merely focused on the initial humanitarian phase and left the more difficult rehabilitation phase of the crisis to the UN.

There could have been no surprises for U.S. civilian and military authorities about what was expected of the UN-led operation that was to follow UNITAF. At the time, experienced UN Secretariat personnel, more accustomed to such resolutions being drafted by the Security Council staff, labeled the U.S.-drafted "nation-building" resolution 814 as the "mother of all resolutions." To blame the initial actions of UNOSOM II on the UN Secretariat is disingenuous at best. What was needed in the U.S. approach was a comprehensive plan with a clear set of goals, as suggested by Ambassador Kiplagat. It would be interesting to know what suggested guidance the U.S. mission in Mogadishu provided to the relevant U.S. authorities during the development of UN Security Council resolution 814.

Another highly experienced practitioner, Ambassador Hank Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs during the Bush administration, gives a very interesting overview in "African Capabilities for Managing Conflict: The Role of the United States." He provides much instructive detail on the history of efforts in Africa of managing conflict, citing OAU intervention in Chad, ECOMOG in Liberia, and the failures of everyone in Rwanda. Cohen's observation that "only when all ethnic and regional groups feel they are not threatened by the political power structure will the threat of conflict fade," in the reviewer's experience, is too limited.

Most opposition groups tend to complain more about lack of political access than about state power. The goal of intervention should be to facilitate wider participation in the political system rather than to focus on the instruments of state power projection. Most bad leaders in Africa and elsewhere tend to persecute their domestic populations when citizens become restless because state institutions are weak, and the state is unable to provide expected protection and services.

Ambassador Cohen includes in his presentation a very interesting outline for a "partnership for conflict management in Africa." The reviewer would feel more confident if these considerations came from an African leader. While noting U.S. ambivalence about the United Nations, the author bows to beltway wisdom and muddies his argument when he repeats the saw that "US peacekeeping troops can be deployed abroad only where America's vital interests are in jeopardy. This is unlikely to be the case anywhere in Africa."

Such a policy premise may support the argument that African forces should be at the forefront of African peacekeeping (with appropriate U.S. support), but ignores the fact that the American public, in general, supports U.S. presence in international efforts to respond to humanitarian emergencies. Long before any decisions were made, Ambassador Cohen was a lonely and courageous voice in the Bush administration in signaling the need to respond quickly to the growing anguish in Somalia. His observations deserve thoughtful consideraton

In a relatively brief presentation, I. William Zartman discusses "Guidelines for Preserving Peace in Africa." He reviews current efforts within Africa to define rules for intervention, the need for building African capacities for peacemaking, demobilization and disarmament issues, and the like. The reviewer would have appreciated more of Zartman's views on the harder aspects of peacekeeping, such as handling rogue elements and the means to foster democratic development.

The book provides the bonus of two summaries. In the first one, Timothy Sisk, a program officer at USIP, examines "Institutional Capacity-Building for African Conflict Management: Summary of the Discussion." He focuses on proposals to reinforce efforts of the OAU to confront growing political disintegration on the continent and the possible need for improved early warning mechanisms and preventive diplomacy. Proposals for the creation of an African Security Council, an African Senate or Council of Elders (Ali Mazrui's suggestion), or an OAU Peacekeeping Force attract Sisk's attention. His discussion of the growing role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is worthy of attention.

The final summary, "Conclusion: What Kind of US Role in African Conflict Resolution?" by Chester Crocker, chairman of the USIP board, and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs throughout the Reagan presidency, continues to focus the reader on areas of intervention short of employing military force. Emphasizing the views of all presenters in the conference, he warns against American complacency about Africa and notes the important roles that the United States has to play on the continent.

The world has learned a lot about the problems of peacekeeping in the past five or so years. Acknowledging that the USIP conference, which provides the substance of this book, took place nearly two years ago, the

volume nonetheless is somewhat disappointing. Other than the Rothchild essay, which strikes well beyond conventional wisdom about the political tools that may be called into peacemaking, Ambassador Kiplagat's knowledgeable insights, and Ambassador Cohen's contribution, which provides an excellent overview of present and potential African conflict mechanisms, there is not much to stimulate the imagination. By the general focus of the discussions and the conclusions, it seems clear that, despite the implications of the title of the book, the conference organizers favor a lesser, rather than a greater, direct U.S. role in peacemaking on the African continent.

(The views expressed in this review are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Army Peacekeeping Institute, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.)

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