

These tendencies can inhibit the rational nature of effective confidence building.²⁶

Divided Actors

These problems are compounded by the fact that many contemporary African conflicts involve an innumerable and ever-changing collection of disputants. The wars in Somalia (some of which are continuing), for example, have involved dozens of armed clan-based factions. More immediately, the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has involved at least 13 separate disputes and at least 15 actors many of which originate from neighbouring countries.²⁷ Even more problematic is the fact that many of the participants are fighting over mutually incompatible issues. Consequently, there is unlikely to be a single solution that will satisfy all domestic and foreign parties. These factors present several problems for confidence building and conflict resolution. First, studies using game theory suggest that cooperation is more likely when there are fewer players or when they interact in small clusters of discriminating individuals. Alternatively, when there are multiple actors, cooperation is infrequent.²⁸ Even if some of the disputants would prefer cooperation, their chances of interacting with one another are rare. Building trust and confidence is also dependent on *repeated* interaction between disputants. But since protracted conflicts often lead to the splintering of rebel groups into different factions, there is less opportunity for reputations of trust and confidence to be built. A further problem is that a lack of cohesiveness among or within parties or ethnic groups makes it difficult to attribute cheating to a party's leadership – a requirement if adversaries are to be confident that obligations are being fulfilled. Alternatively, a lack of cohesiveness also presents difficulties in terms of a leadership's ability to control its dissidents. In Liberia, for example, some of the multiple factions which emerged during the mid-1990s acted as proxies to continue the fighting while the signatories to the peace agreement claimed to have no authority over them.²⁹

Even when there are as few as three disputants to a conflict, the problems of confidence building is complicated. In Zimbabwe, the Commonwealth Monitoring Force (CMF) had to contend not only with agreement violations between the forces of the white minority government and the black majority but also between the two movements, ZANLA and ZIPRA, representing the black

²⁶ Marrack Goulding, "The United Nations and Conflicts in Africa Since the Cold War," *African Affairs* 98 (1999), p. 160.

²⁷ John Prendergast and David Smock, "Putting Humpty Dumpty Together: Reconstructing Peace in the Congo," Special Report (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, August 31 1999), p. 3; The number of conflicts and disputants has led some observers to label the conflict Africa's "Great War." See, for example, David Shearer, "Africa's Great War," *Survival* 41(2) (Summer 1999), pp. 89-106.

²⁸ Robert Axelrod, "The Emergence of Cooperation Among Egoists," *American Foreign Policy Review* 75 (1981), pp. 306-18.

²⁹ See Lyons, *Voting for Peace*, p. 32.