

UN Security Council to consider seriously a preventive intervention in Burundi.

Regional organizations have shown more reluctance than the UN to move on this issue. Nevertheless there has been movement among some of the major regional bodies. There are clear indications, for example, that OAS and OAU orthodoxy have been shaken off. Dealing with internal conflict is now the first priority of the recently established OAU Mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution; and the OAS has changed its statutes so that it can assume greater responsibility for protecting democratically elected governments in the Western Hemisphere. The OSCE, of course, has developed quite an elaborate array of mechanisms to deal with internal situations related to national minorities and human rights and it has demonstrated its institutional usefulness in many situations.⁹ It is clear, however, that crisis resolution and stopping shooting wars are not its strong points.

It is doubtful whether regional bodies command the authority and legitimacy to override state sovereignty without some measure of consent from belligerent parties. In the one obvious relevant and recent case, ECOWAS, which was not granted a UN mandate for its muscular 1990 "peacekeeping" intervention in Liberia, acted without the consent of the most powerful Liberian military faction. Although it later received the mantle of UN legitimacy through financial contributions and the presence of UNOMIL, the Nigerian-led ECOWAS force in Liberia (ECOMOG) never fully recovered from this original sin and suffered from a perceived lack of impartiality throughout its troubled stay in the country.

In the overwhelming majority of recent cases where regional bodies have gotten involved in the regulation and resolution of internal conflict, they have done so with the partial or full consent of belligerent parties under preventive diplomacy, conflict stabilisation or mediation/conflict resolution mandates. Often this has imposed severe limitations on their ability to play an effective third-party role, be it mediatory or observatory. In other cases, consent and quiet diplomacy was exactly what permitted small successes and breakthroughs. The degree of influence of regional organizations seems to have been determined by three principal factors:

- 1) the type of conflict (ethnic/religious, political /constitutional, non-violent/violent);
- 2) the extent to which the parties in the area of tensions are amenable to exterior influence, and;

⁹ For instance, the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), the Human Dimension (Moscow) Mechanism, the Consensus minus one rule, the OSCE Code of Conduct, the Emergency Meeting Mechanism, Long term OSCE missions, etc.