

of no return), but they continue to perceive strategic or tactical advantages in continuing a conflict.¹⁵

For the purposes of this paper, and in anticipation of a priori arguments, we argue that:

- there is a good case for accepting the early intervention of the international community in ethnic conflicts as a principle, despite the current bias of international law and practice;
- there is a good practical and moral case to be made for strong preventive measures and early intervention on the part of the international community; and
- there is a need to examine the possibility of isolating and de-politicizing as much as possible the management of a conflict by relying on specialized international agencies or organizations, expert advice and new or existing legal instruments.

While the point has been expressed that internationalization draws undue attention to national minorities and inhibits the search for quiet domestic solutions, this kind of reasoning has a ring of ex post facto justification. The plain fact is that most conflicts are internationalized because of the failure to find national solutions. The more rapidly the international community can respond, the more effectively serious and long-term conflicts can be averted.

STANDARDS AND INSTRUMENTS:

One of the best possibilities for preventing the escalation of ethnic conflict is to offer stronger guarantees for the respect of basic human rights and the rights of "persons belonging to a minority" in particular. In this area, the international community does not lack standards but is lamentably weak in summoning the political will to ensure their effective implementation.

In terms of human rights standards, the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe are providing, through existing covenants, declarations or commitments, enough material to define the obligations of states. Other regional organizations such as the OAS and the OAU have also developed comparable standards. As for minority rights, most of these organizations are lagging behind the CSCE. The adoption by the 1992 UN General Assembly of the