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POLICY STAFF COMMENTARY

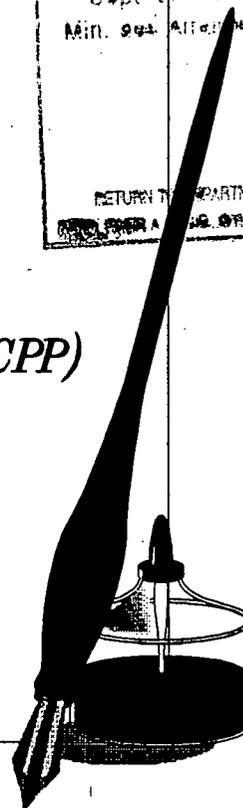
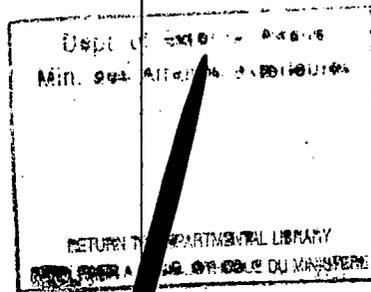


CENTRAL AFRICA Turning a Tide

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CENTRAL AFRICA: TURNING A TIDE

1. SUMMARY

Violence looms - Can We Respond in Time?

- The growing threat of a Hutu invasion of Rwanda from camps in Zaire gives a new urgency to the central African crisis. Events in fragile Burundi, as always, depend heavily on the unfolding of Rwandan events. The international community understands the urgency of the central African problem but is unable to agree on how to respond. The UN's ability to deal with the camps is hampered by an inability to agree on a new mandate, the costs of a new operation and the difficulties in finding troop contributors. If the UN cannot act in time, there may be a significant renewal of violence; even if it does, there remains a critical need to find a durable solution to the region's problems.
- New approaches are needed. The international community can have a significant influence provided that it makes clear to the parties that there will be rewards for responsible behaviour and sanctions for irresponsibility.

A Strategy for Peace and Stability

- **Short-Term:** with the end of the war in Rwanda, the humanitarian rationale for the refugee camps is gone. As soon as possible, and with the concurrence of the relief agencies, the camps should be closed according to a schedule corresponding to the opening of humanitarian way-stations inside Rwanda. This may not require changes to the existing Security Council resolutions. If international military force is needed outside Rwanda, it should be used for only a very short period of days and only to facilitate evacuation of the camps.
- **Medium-Term:** there must be a serious international effort to reconstruct basic services in Rwanda and focus attention on the political and economic situation in Burundi.
- **Long-Term:**
 - Prospects for Tutsi/Hutu reconciliation must take account of the importance of the fundamental ethnic mathematics (85 % Hutu and 14 % Tutsi) and of the difficulty in making pure western-style

democracy succeed in this context. The weakness of civic society and government institutions compounds the problem.

- A new system of power sharing with appropriate checks and balances is needed, perhaps based in part on traditional clan political roles, and grafted onto modern democratic forms.
- A new international approach stressing support for regional economic and political integration could not only help each country to stand on its own feet economically but also could help downplay the internal ethnic equation.

2. CURRENT SITUATION: CRISIS AGAIN

Trouble in the camps

A new phase of the central African crisis looms, as a Hutu invasion of Rwanda from Zaire, or at least new Hutu efforts to de-stabilize the new Rwandan government, seem increasingly probable. Reports of Hutu rearmament, of intense anti-RPF/Tutsi propaganda being circulated in the Zaire camps, and of assistance from Zaire forces all point in this direction. New massacres would likely accompany renewed military actions. The refugee camps in Zaire and elsewhere are acknowledged as being effectively under the control of forces responsible for the massacres in the spring and summer of this year, and aid and human rights workers describe the situation as "critical."

Unravelling in Rwanda

Inside Rwanda, the government is hobbled by a lack of reconstruction assistance (which hardliners use to argue that the "soft" line taken so far by the government has failed to produce results). New problems are developing as Tutsi exiles of the 1960 expulsion return and take up land vacated by fleeing Hutus. Thousands of detainees are being held and the suspicion is that many have been falsely accused of war crimes. UNAMIR/GOR relations are increasingly strained. UNAMIR and the RPA are now engaged in a difficult operation in the "Zone Turquoise" to disarm the militias and facilitate the return of 350,000 displaced which, even if successful, will put new strains on the country as it tries to reabsorb this population.

Fragile Burundi

In Burundi, a fragile and incomplete peace holds - just. Hutu extremists from Burundi may be joining the Rwandan Hutu extremists in the camps to plan together their next round of violence. The inter-relatedness of the two countries is such that there cannot be full resolution of one country's crisis in the absence of resolution of the other's.

Confusion and Uncertainty

Relief assistance has stanchd the problems of starvation and disease in the camps. The RPF victory has halted the fighting for now but there are no signs of political reconciliation. The UN is establishing a war crimes tribunal for Rwanda (which, once operating, may serve to promote justice but may or may not promote

reconciliation), but has yet to agree on a force for the camps, inter alia, to assist refugees wishing to return to Rwanda. No steps have been taken to counteract Hutu extremists' propaganda. Human rights monitors inside Rwanda have failed to produce the confidence that their deployment was intended to achieve. In Burundi, thinly veiled blackmail of Tutsi and Hutu extremists has prevented the conclusion of a solid political agreement despite months of negotiations brokered by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG).

3. ISSUE: IS A POLITICAL SOLUTION POSSIBLE?

The tragedy in Central Africa raises questions of whether a political solution is possible. There are serious obstacles that must be overcome; a necessary first step is to acknowledge that they exist.

The dilemmas of the immediate

International efforts have focused on:

- humanitarian relief;
- crisis management aimed at:
 - restoring normalcy to Rwanda, especially by facilitating the refugees' return,
 - preventing Burundi from exploding,
 - relieving pressure on Zaire, and, to a lesser extent, on Tanzania.

The root political problem - essentially that the Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority in both Burundi and Rwanda cannot find an acceptable political formula for living together - is still a background issue, overshadowed by more immediate concerns.

Without addressing this fundamental political problem, however, the best that can be hoped for is a temporary truce between these two groups whose capacity for slaughter is virtually unrivalled and, apparently, far from exhausted. Depressingly, despite heroic efforts by UN mediators, and some local and regional politicians, no accord or arrangement so far devised offers a lasting solution.

Bad arithmetic

The Arusha accords, for example, if fully implemented in Rwanda, would culminate in an election likely to produce a polarization along ethnic lines. This was, broadly, the outcome in the 1993 Burundi elections, in spite of an extensive, multi-year and enlightened government program before the elections de-emphasizing ethnicity and stressing democratic and civic values. Ultimately, given the strength of individuals'

identification with their ethnic group, the arithmetic in each country (14% Tutsi, 85 % Hutu) means that the ground for compromise and confidence-building between the two groups is extremely limited.

Bad Politics

This problem is worsened by the weakness of civic culture, government institutions and rule of law in both countries: given the history of coups, military and extra-military violence and failed democratic attempts, enshrining any number of guarantees in constitutional or other legal instruments may be necessary but hardly sufficient to restore peace. The massacres in each country since last year have, moreover, made reconciliation that much harder to achieve as the worst fears of each side about the other have been realized.

International frustration and exhaustion

The international community is already reluctant to become too deeply involved, particularly in restoring security and in aiding the Rwandan government. Rwandan relief efforts will surely exceed \$1 billion and, with an eye on what has occurred in Somalia, donors will be very cautious to commit significant new sums to peacekeeping or reconstruction in either Rwanda or Burundi if there are no durable solutions in place. Other commitments, such as Angola, loom and will compete with central African needs.

4. NEW APPROACHES

In view of these factors, new approaches are needed which combine short, medium and long-term measures.

I. An overarching necessity: Explicit conditionality

Any considerations of durable solutions must accept two premises:

- international involvement is essential;
- fundamental changes must be engineered.

The two condition each other, and the international community must not be shy about making the linkages explicit. At each stage towards reconstruction and reconciliation, international conditions will have to be set -- and be met -- before we embark on the next stage. As Somalia has shown, it is important to send clear

signals to warring parties that international assistance is conditional, and that the flow of assistance will vary according to behaviour.

No party in central Africa should be permitted to believe that assistance - political, food, reconstruction or security - will continue to flow in the absence of progress. In particular, the political elites of each group must be made to understand very clearly that they will be held responsible for failure. What the international community may consider a "forgiving" or "realistic" approach, could be seen on the ground as - literally - a license to kill. For example, had donors held the Habyarimana government to its promise to implement the Arusha accords in December 1993, instead of continuing assistance when this deadline for implementation had passed, events might have developed very differently in Rwanda in 1994. By allowing the then GOR to avoid or delay its obligations under Arusha, however, the international community may have given hardliners the impression that there would be no real consequences for failure to comply with promises made.

It is also vital that the international community speak with one voice: where there is a true concert, pressure can result in meaningful changes; where there is division, the parties on the ground will exploit it to their advantage.

II. Short-Term Measures: Close the Camps

Reasons to close quickly

The refugee camps, at least in Zaire, should be closed. This proposal is premised on:

- 1) the urgency of the situation. The potential for an explosion of violence is very real: now is the time to take action;
- 2) the unavailability of sufficient troops and financing by the UN for a new Zaire operation, at least in the near future, together with the difficulty in agreeing on and having accepted by Zaire, Rwanda and others an appropriate mandate. The delays in mounting a new UN operation may be fatal, as they were in April;
- 3) The current Secretary-General's recommendation for a two year operation is unlikely to attract much support and, in any case, it is counter-productive to allow the camps to exist for such a lengthy period;

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4) the humanitarian basis for the camps' existence is gone. The fighting in Rwanda which led to the refugees' flight is long over, and the GOR has, since taking office, demonstrated reasonable good faith and restraint. While security conditions in Rwanda are imperfect, the risk to the returnees would not appear to outweigh the risks associated with keeping the camps open. Humanitarian relief can be provided to returnees at way-stations inside Rwanda where, in addition, tools, seeds and other assistance can be distributed to help the returnees get on with their lives and begin to rebuild their country. Transport can be arranged by UNAMIR and relief agencies. The longer the return is delayed, the more difficulties there will be with Tutsi exiles who have reclaimed land;

5) disarmament or the creation of safe havens in the camps, as the Secretary-General proposes, will almost certainly lead to violence. Disarming militias and soldiers crossing the border would be much simpler and less likely to provoke violence. Border checks could be jointly mounted by UNAMIR and the RPA to carry this out. While some re-infiltration of arms would undoubtedly occur as militiamen traversed hills, heavy weapons could not get in, nor could large groups of organized soldiers, particularly in the Goma border region where access to and from Rwanda is relatively restricted by geography;

6) attempting to mount an ambitious project in Zaire will be much more difficult than simply providing the appropriate means for refugees to come back to Rwanda, where security can be provided and relief distributed under the existing UNAMIR mandate.

International coordination

The key to acceptance of camp closure will be agreement of the UNHCR and other relief agencies for this plan (which would represent a major philosophical departure for them). This approach is in line with the thinking of many in the aid community who find conditions in the camp dangerous, and realize that there is no way to separate food going to the innocent from that going to killers. Thus, justifying the camps existence is becoming more and more difficult for relief agencies.

The relief agencies themselves are the first to admit that there is inadequate coordination of relief efforts (up to 83 NGOs were operating in Goma alone recently). Under these circumstances, it would be unrealistic to expect early agreement among all these players on the concept of camp closure or the means to implement it. For camp closure to be agreed to quickly, it may be that the half-

dozen lead agencies, including UNHCR and DHA, need to meet, decide if they will accept closures and, if so, work out a feasible means to take care of the humanitarian issues this raises.

Humanitarian concerns could be taken into account by implementing a phased approach to closure (either closing each camp sequentially or reducing operations at each on given dates) would allow for the most orderly means to prepare the relief stations in Rwanda and facilitate the return home.

The returnees should be given incentives for going back, to avoid a situation where they simply drift away or regroup in makeshift camps for the purposes of reorganising a military onslaught on the GOR. Incentives ("resettlement packages") could include farming supplies, extra food, tools and other goods that would help settle them back into civilian life.

Temporary way-stations

It will be important to ensure that the way-stations in Rwanda not become new refugee camps. Given the tenacity of Hutu extremists, and their organizational skills, it is doubtful that any quasi-permanent settlement, such as a camp, will be able to resist the re-imposition of the extremists' control. The presence of UNAMIR or other international security forces in new camps would not be large enough to prevent this. Therefore, the way-stations should offer only very temporary shelter while facilitating the re-integration of the returnees.

Face down the extremists

The principal issue is whether Hutu extremists would allow refugees to leave the camps. If they did not, and there were no more food supplies, the leadership would probably face opposition from the refugee population (it would be important to ensure that the leaders themselves received no support or suggestions of support so that they could not prosper while the population suffered). This could provoke more violence, although, since it would be coming from a population which has backed the extremists or at least acquiesced to some degree, it would be of a kind having the potential to remove the leaders. This is not a risk which the leaders have so far taken. If the likelihood of violence is too great, the international community could consider sending military force for very brief periods (such as a few days) simply to "pry open the door" in the camps and permit evacuation to the Rwandan border.

Clear mandate

To implement such a scheme would not necessarily require any new Security Council resolution. If international military force were thought necessary, it could be arranged bilaterally with Zaire as were the relief operations in Goma (Zaire might well be supportive of their closure given local opposition to the camps and an appreciation that the burden of the camps would fall on Zaire once relief ended). If a new Security Council resolution is required, it should be simpler to agree upon than one based on the current Secretary-General's recommendation because the operation would be brief, the cost minor, and the objective clear.

Accurate information

Prior to implementing such a scheme, there would have to be adequate dissemination in the camps of information on the evacuation process. Radio would provide the best means for this.

Encourage moderates

This simpler, quicker approach to assisting those who wish to return to Rwanda may also allow the early emergence of a moderate Hutu leadership not tied to the RPF government, as Hutus are permitted to return in numbers to Rwanda. Until such a "legitimate" Hutu leadership appears, serious reconciliation talks are impossible.

Disarm returnees

Of course, there is a strong possibility that many of those who would return would do so with the intention of causing trouble. However, most should have been relieved of at least their heavier weapons before re-entering Rwanda. Moreover, given the scale of participation in atrocities and the depth of animosity towards the Tutsis, it is unrealistic to expect that any scheme would be able to prevent all troublemakers from returning.

A phased approach

It could be argued that the camps in Tanzania or Burundi should be closed first since the problems there are relatively less severe and the closure operation could enjoy a greater chance of success. However, should such operations in those camps fail, this would make dealing with the Zaire camps that much more daunting. The Zaire camps are the core of the short-term problem: it is to these

camps that the Rwandan army fled with its weapons; it is here that the military, political and militia leadership rests; and it is here, therefore, that the greatest potential resides for destabilizing Rwanda. Success in the Zaire camps would probably lead to success in dealing with all the camps since the militias in the Tanzanian and Burundi camps would become demoralized. Even if closing the Zaire camps failed, however, this would not necessarily foreclose action in the other, "easier" camps.

Once Zaire camps were closed, the next phase would be to close the Burundi, Tanzanian and Ugandan camps. The speed with which this phase would be implemented would depend on the rate at which relief agencies could cope with new influxes of returnees.

The manner in which the camps for the displaced are closed in the "Zone Turquoise" will have to be studied very closely in preparing plans for the closure of refugee camps.

Prevent inter-camp "pollution"

It will be important in developing the phased plan to build in measures to prevent the transfer of problems from closed camps to those still open: in particular, there should be a means to stop troublemakers from going to new camps. The Rwanda War Crimes Tribunal could play a part in the identification and arrest of these individuals.

III. Medium-Term Imperatives: Reconstruction in Rwanda and Stabilization in Burundi

Rwanda the priority

The reconstruction of Rwanda must be a priority. The international community must not allow Rwanda's government to be denied funds from the World Bank and IMF on specious grounds: there is an emergency and, in the circumstances, the new government has performed reasonably well and deserves financial and political support.

Reconstruction will be difficult to achieve if the refugees do not return in sufficient numbers. If they do not, the country will become increasingly Tutsi as exiles return and take up "vacated" land and businesses. This, of course, will only further aggravate Tutsi/Hutu tensions. So long as refugees stay away, Rwanda's ability to

win assistance and restart its economy will be compromised by the perception that: Tutsis have not done enough to recreate an ethnically balanced state; there has been expropriation without compensation of Hutu property; and an ever-present threat of invasion waits on its borders (this reinforces the argument for early camp closures).

Reconstruction assistance should be conditional. Respect for human rights, restoration of discipline in the army, and guarantees of Hutus' property rights should be demanded in addition to the customary economic disciplines, including good governance issues. Coordination of aid efforts could be unusually difficult to achieve, especially since political objectives and conditions should feature prominently: rarely do donors have the same political agenda. However, the UN could take a lead, and develop with select NGO's, the IFIs and bilateral donors the general guidelines for ensuring that aid is effective both developmentally and in terms of political reconstruction.

Stabilize Burundi

Also a priority in the medium-term is the restoration of stability in Burundi. An important first step would be for the international community to link stability in Burundi to reconstruction in Rwanda. The political leadership in Burundi must be made to see that aid and trade will be detrimentally affected by failure to achieve durable political solutions in both countries. So far, virtually no attention has been paid to the economic dimension and the power that economic arguments can have in persuading political figures to act responsibly.

That Burundi has had any stability at all since the massacres of October 1993 is due partly to the SRSG's skill in brokering negotiations, partly to the relative standoff between the Tutsis, who control the army, and the Hutus, who control the government (and are increasingly armed and militant), and partly to each group's interest in what is happening in Rwanda: the Tutsis are encouraged by the RPF/Tutsi victory but frightened by the slaughter of their kin; the Hutus fear Tutsi revenge for Rwanda and wonder whether they should strike first or hold back, given the Tutsis' military strength. The way in which Burundi evolves will reflect, therefore, how events unfold to the north. The international community can assist by aiding the peaceful return and integration of the Hutus to Rwanda, which will help calm Burundi, and lay some groundwork for serious political discussions there.

IV. The Long-term Challenge: Political reconciliation

Attention must be paid to how real reconciliation can be achieved in both countries. Calls for a return to democracy will be insufficient: neither Rwanda's expansion of political freedoms leading to the Arusha accords nor Burundi's elections were successful. It is clear that pure western-style democratic processes must be adapted to local conditions. Given the weakness of civic society, including the concept of rule of law, the weakness of government institutions, and the strength of the military and militias in both countries, an appropriate system of checks and balances on the exercise of power needs to be established.

1) Power-sharing: Power-sharing arrangements, not necessarily mirroring the vote strength of a party or its ethnic basis of support, will have to be put in place. The most difficult aspect of finding the right formula will be determining what makes a party legitimate if it is not the numbers who voted for it. Some form of party structuring which dilutes ethnic blocs is essential. The South African and other relevant models should be examined.

2) Guarantees: Constitutional and legal guarantees (emphasizing equality of access regardless of ethnicity) will be needed. The legal system will have to be revamped to ensure that ethnic groups are represented; more importantly, a legal culture will have to be developed in which justice is impartially dispensed. In this connection, the Rwanda War Crimes Tribunal must operate -- and must be seen to operate -- expeditiously, transparently and fairly.

At present, there is no international plan to establish a similar tribunal for Burundi. Thought should be given to expanding the mandate for the Rwandan tribunal so that it can deliver justice in both countries for crimes against humanity.

3) Cultural Checks and Balances: Prior to colonization, an elaborate indigenous system of (Hutu, Tutsis and Twa) clan-based power existed, centred on the monarchy. This system diffused authority and provided certain checks and balances on behaviour, restraints that are absent today. While it would not be possible, or desirable, to entirely reproduce such a system now, elements of it could have value in reconstructing these societies. The aim would be to disaggregate power to allow for shifting coalitions on different issues (as opposed to ethnic polarization on each issue); the means would be some system that connected traditional cultural

forms of control and authority with the structures of a modern state capable of delivering goods and services fairly to its own citizens.

4) Military Reform: The military should be brought under control through a variety of means, including highly-conditional "hands-on" multilateral assistance:

- military expenses should factor into ODA allocations. Expenditures on arms should be kept within clear limits or ODA flows would be cut off. Also, some ODA money could be used for promoting certain programs within the military to effect the changes necessary for promoting moderation and responsibility;
- irregulars, if not the armies, should be disbanded with appropriate demobilization assistance from donors and African countries with expertise in this field (Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Uganda).
- the military should be professionalised and made responsive only to civilian control. In this connection, the military should be "internationalized" through peacekeeping missions and officer exchange programs. This should be done through UN-supervised programs to avoid the perception that one faction is being favored, as was the case when France provided Habyarimana's government with military assistance. Intra-African exchanges would have the added benefit of professionalizing other African militaries.
- the military should be adequately compensated and promotion should be open to all regardless of ethnicity (or clan, an especially serious problem in Burundi where coups originate among frustrated lower ranks drawn from lower status Tutsi clans).

V. Building Towards a Regional Solution

Broaden the base

Among the most valuable approaches to long-term reconstruction of the two countries would be to foster greater regional economic, social, political and military integration. Like most sub-Saharan countries, Rwanda and Burundi have only very limited links with their neighbours. The major economic ties remain with metropolitan countries outside Africa. Political links within Africa, including those

to the OAU, are minimal although, in Rwanda's case, Tanzania and Uganda have taken a particular interest in its internal events.

But not too broad

Clearly, as the unimpressive performance of trade projects grouping large numbers of African countries such as the Preferential Trade Area shows, too wide an approach is unlikely to succeed soon in Africa. At the political level, the OAU is similarly lacking. Failure to achieve great strides at the continental level is unsurprising, however, given the weakness of links among immediate African neighbours (not to mention among the more distant) and the continued strength of ties to distant export markets, often the former colonial power. There are simply too few natural links tying together Africa east-west and north-south on which continental approaches can build.

On the other hand, there are real economic and, to some degree, political regions within Africa which offer promise. The South Africans have recognized this and are strengthening their natural economic region (based on SADC) before turning their attention to other areas of the continent. Unfortunately, there has been little international interest in recent regional integration projects in Africa. It is time to examine, as part of a realistic and lasting solution to central Africa's problems, serious international support for regional integration in this area.

Start economically

Rwanda and Burundi would benefit greatly if they could be more regionally integrated. The economic gains would enlarge the very limited pie now being fought over by Tutsis and Hutus. In anticipation of static or diminishing aid levels in future, more economic gains must be generated locally, a goal which integration could further. Moreover, both countries are, even by African standards, unusually isolated, lacking any rail links outside, and located hundreds of kilometres from the nearest seaports.

There is a natural economic or trading region in this area which comprises Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, eastern Zaire and these two countries (a total population and potential market of at least 85 million people). Building on this de facto region, the international community through ODA and other measures should strive to enhance the informal links already in place and strengthen the existing or incipient formal links (the moribund Great Lakes Cooperation Agreement and the 1993 Treaty of East African Cooperation for example).

With greater economic integration, rogue domestic behaviour, disruptive of economic life, would become increasingly painful politically. The Arusha process took an important step in this direction and should be built on.

Then build politically

Regional economic links should be complemented by strengthening political ones, also at the regional level. This would help to lower tensions among countries suspicious of each others' intentions (Zaire/Uganda for example); more importantly, they would encourage habits of cooperation and help familiarize at least elites with problems and solutions in neighbouring states. Extreme actions could be more readily restrained by an awareness that, indeed, the "neighbours are watching".

Dilute the arithmetic

For Rwanda and Burundi, the ethnic arithmetic leaves little room for manoeuvre around the problem of Tutsi minority status. With more regional integration, however, the minority would be effectively less isolated because the boundaries of Burundi and Rwanda effectively would be that much less important. The Tutsis could become one group among many in a larger east/central Africa. Less confined to less isolated states, the Hutus would also have less reason to fear their Tutsi neighbours and, hopefully, would become less hostile to them.

Practical international support

A wide array of regional initiatives could be supported by the international community. To develop the reflex of cooperation, ties should be fostered primarily at the functional rather than the formal state-to-state level: some could link private sectors, others NGOs, still others parastatals or boards and agencies.

Examples would include:

- cooperation on the Great Lakes fishery;
- linking the Rwanda/Burundi power grids to Uganda's excess generating capacity;
- developing common coffee and tea marketing arrangements and common agricultural research;
- enhancing transport links so that, for example, all countries which benefit from a road link pay for its construction and upkeep;
- developing parliamentary and youth exchanges;
- promoting exchanges among militaries and police forces with the objective of professionalizing them.

controlling own destiny -- but in self-determination

Central Africa: Turning a Tide



While it would be desirable to back projects that produce the most economic and political benefits, what would be more important at this time would be simply to start the integrative process: therefore, action in the areas where results are easiest to obtain should be the priority.

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