

CHAPTER 8

Weak States and Ethnic Conflict: State Collapse and Reconstruction in Africa

INTRODUCTION

Much of today's ethnic conflict can be found in the developing world, particularly on the vast continents of Africa and Asia. The large number of communal groups living here, combined with the artificial nature of state borders drawn by European colonial powers, has furnished hothouse conditions for ethnic competition. Within the developing world, Africa accounts for a large proportion of conflicts based on ethnicity, kinship, religion, and other identity markers.

Studying cases from Africa is important for several reasons. The continent is rich in terms of ethnic diversity, but it also has many weak central governments. In addition, state boundaries are arbitrary and, more than in the rest of the world, are not congruent with patterns of ethnic settlement. Ian Lustick observed that “[a]fter more than thirty years of independence . . . the hegemonic status of the belief that African borders are immutable, and thereby excluded from calculations about how Africans can respond to the exigencies of their existence, appears to be breaking down.” As a result, “Africa faces, among its other woes, the possibility of cascading patterns of fragmentation and attachment.”¹

Examining what happens when states fragment can help us understand the role played by ethnicity in this process as well as the part played by international actors. As we have seen time and again, international actors are reluctant to recognize the validity of ethno-secessionists' arguments and prefer status-quo arrangements. The statist bias of the international system allows for no exceptions even when (1) the states that are fragmenting are insignificant, located on the periphery of the global economy and the state system; and (2) the movements attacking the state often have justifiable historical grievances, land claims, victimization histories, and other moral claims.

The one notable case in Africa of a recent successful secession was Eritrea's independence from Ethiopia in 1993. A large part of the explanation for this lies in the collapse two years earlier of the Soviet Union, which had secured Ethiopia as a military and political ally beginning in 1977. When the Soviet Union ceased to exist, so did authoritarian Ethiopia.² But in many African states today, both borders and central governments continue to come under attack. The Darfur conflict in Sudan—Africa's largest country in terms of surface area—has been recognized by the international community as a humanitarian tragedy. Another large country on the continent, the Democratic Republic of Congo (previously Zaire), has also succumbed to the malaise of weak central authority. But a third, South Africa, has surprised observers by constructing a strong state with widespread legitimacy.

This chapter focuses on ethnic conflicts in large but weak African states—Congo in Central Africa and Sudan in northeast Africa—as well as on a strong, large state—South Africa. Our analysis begins with the notorious case of massive genocide carried out in a compact and weak state with high population density—Rwanda in Central Africa.

The case studies of unsettled African states can shed light on the part played by external intervention in exacerbating or resolving ethnic conflicts. A hypothesis to be tested is that intervention by forces from the economically and militarily more powerful first world should have a much greater chance of success in regions where warring parties possess fewer resources. We also wish to know whether outside intervention to manage ethnic-related conflicts in seemingly hopeless collapsed states is even likely. Or are external parties complicit in these conflicts because they manipulate them to maintain control over valuable natural resources that the world needs?

WEAK STATES

Weak states or unsettled states may be charitable descriptions for what William Zartman has bluntly termed state collapse, a widespread phenomenon across Africa. "Current state collapse—in the Third World, but also in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe—is not a matter of civilizational decay. . . . Nor is the process merely an organic characteristic of growth and decay, a life cycle in the rise and fall of nations."³ For Zartman, state collapse entails the loss of a multiplicity of functions:

As the decision-making center of government, the state is paralyzed and inoperative: laws are not made, order is not preserved, and societal cohesion is not enhanced. As a symbol of identity, it has lost its power of conferring a name on its people and a meaning to their social action. As a territory, it is no longer assured security and provisionment by a central sovereign organization. As the authoritative political institution, it has lost its legitimacy, which is therefore up for grabs, and so has lost its right to command and conduct public affairs. As a system of socioeconomic organization, its functional balance of inputs and outputs is destroyed; it no longer receives supports from nor exercises controls over its people, and it no longer is even the target of demands, because its people know that it is incapable of providing supplies.⁴

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State collapse, like the related notion of unsettled states, may not simply be a by-product of ethno-nationalism; it may represent a factor promoting a retreat into ethnic identities. This was the case in Rwanda in the mid-1990s and much of neighboring Congo after that.

When anticolonial struggles succeeded in forging independent states in much of Africa beginning in the late 1950s, it appeared that a honeymoon period would arise during which various ethnicities in new countries would put off disagreements in the interests of state. In practice, however, separatist movements appeared simultaneously with the independence of the first African colonies. Given the widely perceived illegitimacy of colonially demarcated borders, the power vacuum created by the withdrawal of European powers, and the precarious existence of nascent independent states, this appeared to be a propitious time for breakaway movements to be successful.

The most significant bids were made in the Congo and Nigeria.⁵ Key ethnic groups located in Katanga and **Biafra**, respectively, sought to break away from the new states that had been constructed—often designed in such a way as to safeguard the economic interests of the departing colonial powers. Their failed efforts to achieve statehood owed much to the role played by international actors (the United Nations [UN] in the Congo, multinational oil companies in Nigeria) that resolved to maintain the territorial integrity of fragmenting states. For the UN, which was strongly backed by the United States, secession of Katanga would have set a dangerous precedent for the rest of postcolonial Africa. For the oil companies involved in the region at the time—and subsequently in other parts of Africa for natural resource companies (usually headquartered in the United States or the European Union) having stakes in diamond, gold, rubber, petroleum, phosphate, magnesium, or other mineral enterprises—political stability represented a requirement for doing business. It is striking, then, that “ethnic” conflicts in Africa, fought fifty years apart, appear to display a local character but, on closer examination, have commonalities anchored in the global economy.

Central Africa



WEAK STATES, POLITICIZED IDENTITIES IN CENTRAL AFRICA

In few other places is the view that ancient hatreds account for mass killings more accepted as an explanation than in Rwanda and Burundi in the 1990s. Markers distinguishing Hutu and Tutsi identities are believed to be so fixed, and their hatred for each other is taken as such a given, that observers saw the mass killings in Central Africa in the 1990s as almost inevitable. Yet, in Central Africa, as in many other parts of the world, ethnic identities are often not so much acquisitions inherited at birth but ascriptions engendered by the need to anchor artificial states in collective identities.

Arguably, we are dealing with three interlocking cases of ethnic violence and state disintegration in Central Africa: the mass killings in Rwanda and Burundi in the mid-1990s were followed shortly afterward by the spread of ethnic rivalries to neighboring Congo (then called Zaire). Ethnic divisions were a necessary condition for mass violence but alone, we contend, they do not furnish an adequate explanation for why genocidal acts were committed, nor why the attempt to kill off a state, Congo, should have been attempted. It is important to examine some of the background conditions. Chief among these is that in order to prop up colonial governments and maintain centralized rule, colonizers used divide-and-rule tactics, thereby politicizing preexisting ethnic divisions and privileging one group over others. “Ethnic” conflicts in Central Africa can be construed, therefore, as the ethnicization of a struggle for power and a battle over natural resources.

The Colonial Legacy and Hutu–Tutsi Rivalry

One specialist summarized the complex historical sources of identity among peoples from Central Africa as follows: “A woman living in central Africa drew her identity from where she was born, from her lineage and in-laws, and from her wealth. Tribal or ethnic identity was rarely important in everyday life and could change as people moved over vast areas in pursuit of trade or new lands. Conflicts were more often within tribal categories than between them, as people fought over sources of water, farmland, or grazing rights.”⁶

John Bowen, author of this passage, was describing Rwanda, site of large-scale massacres between April and July 1994. He acknowledged that in some districts of the country, ethnic identities have more salience (northern Rwanda) than in others (southern Rwanda). He nevertheless contended that “it was the colonial powers, and the independent states succeeding them, which declared that each and every person had an ‘ethnic identity’ that determined his or her place within the colony or the postcolonial system.” European powers had recognized for a long time the importance of securing allies from among the native population. The prerequisite for fomenting ethnic schism, and therefore divide-and-rule tactics, was cultivating ethnic markers among groups. To be sure, before German colonialists arrived in 1899, the **Tutsis**, representing about 15 percent of the population, ruled over the majority Hutu population. When Belgium took over the protectorate after World War I, it extended Tutsi domination by favoring this ethnic group over others.

Colonial powers thus politicized ethnicity. Both “in Rwanda and Burundi, German and Belgian colonizers admired the taller people called Tutsis, who formed a small minority in both colonies. The Belgians gave the Tutsis privileged access to education and jobs and even instituted a minimum height requirement for entrance

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to college.” The Tutsi minority was thus groomed as the traditional ruling class in the region. The irony was that “**Hutus** and Tutsis had intermarried to such an extent that they were not easily distinguished physically (nor are they today).”⁷ The two groups share the same language and customs in Rwanda, just as they share another language and other customs in Burundi. Hutus are set off from each other by clan and regional affiliations, just as Tutsis are. They are not unified communities whose only fault line is Hutu–Tutsi. The high population density of the region should, if anything, make ethnic “boundaries” even less fixed.

For René Lemarchand, “it is the interplay between ethnic realities and their subjective reconstruction (or manipulation) by political entrepreneurs that lies at the root of the Hutu–Tutsi conflict.”⁸ Making ethnic categories salient in the first place, and inflating and politicizing their significance, serve to disguise the struggle over the more fundamental matters of power and resources. The introduction of ethnic identity cards by the Belgian administration in 1931—dividing the Central African population into Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa—was a first step in the process of politicizing ethnicity.

Following World War II, both Burundi and Rwanda became United Nations trust territories. Both became independent in 1962. In Burundi, a military-controlled government headed by Tutsis was to wield power until 1993. Although Hutus formed the majority ethnic group, a succession of Hutu political leaders who strove for public office was systematically killed by the army. In 1972, a wider Hutu rebellion broke out; it was crushed by the Tutsi army, leading to the death of some 200,000 Hutus. A similar though smaller-scale ethnic massacre had occurred in 1965, and another was to take place in 1988. Finally in 1993, Burundi, following South Africa’s lead, embarked on a democratic transition and a Hutu was elected president. But the experiment was short lived: in October of the same year, he was assassinated by Tutsi extremists, triggering a new civil war between the two ethnic groups. Again the Tutsi-dominated army killed tens of thousands of Hutus. In an illustration of stimulus-response dynamics, his assassination was the catalyst for revenge by Hutu extremists—but it was carried out on Tutsis in neighboring Rwanda.

Rwanda’s president, Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu, had first taken power in 1973. Over two decades of rule, he was pressured by Hutu extremists in his government to take more repressive measures against Tutsis. Well supplied with military equipment by France, which wanted to ensure that power in the ethnically divided country remained centralized, Habyarimana had few incentives to pursue a policy of political accommodation. France conveniently ignored the increasing human rights abuses committed by the Rwandan government until it was too late to stop a more generalized armed conflict.

The trigger for the mass slaughter in Rwanda was the death of President Habyarimana and his counterpart—the second elected Hutu president of Burundi—in a suspicious plane crash in April 1994. A tribunal in France blamed Tutsi rebels for firing the missile that shot down the jet. In the late 1980s, a disgruntled Tutsi rebel group, the **Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)**, led by Paul Kagame, had been formed in neighboring Uganda. (As we will see over and over again in this chapter, ethnic movements in the African conflicts we describe had an uncanny knack for adopting names for their organizations suggesting broad political and national consensus—which is precisely what they did not stand for.) RPF leader Kagame denied involvement in the assassination of two Central African Hutu presidents and instead claimed that it was a Hutu ploy to legitimate planned genocidal actions

against Tutsis. An even less credible hypothesis was that in trying to supplant France's influence in Central Africa, the Clinton administration had ordered the killings of pro-French Hutu politicians.

The assassination of three elected Hutu leaders in six months in Central Africa led to the rapid mobilization of Hutu soldiers. Formed into a loose militia group that became known as the *Interahamwe*, they were incited to slaughter their ethnic "Other." Between April and July 1994, over half a million Tutsis were massacred; some historians claim this 100-day period of killing represents the swiftest genocide in history. "The [Hutu] extremists' aim,' stated Africa Rights, 'was for the entire Hutu populace to participate in the killing. That way, the blood of genocide would stain everybody.'"⁹ The murderous Hutu reprisals contributed to the next cycle of ethnic violence: by fall 2004, the RPF had retaken all of Rwanda; had in turn killed hundreds of thousands of Hutus, some as a result of diseases like cholera and dysentery; and had forced another 2 million to flee to nearby countries. Because many took refuge in eastern Congo, the RPF had a ready-made pretext—settling accounts with Hutu militias—for launching an incursion into that country in 1996. Kagame soon became president of the country, banned opposition parties, had himself re-elected in a way that invited comparisons to Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, and made it a crime to deny the RFP-authored version of the genocide.

In Burundi, a civil war continued between Tutsi and Hutu militias until 2005. Its toll was over 300,000 dead. Hutu militias operated from bases in northern Tanzania to attack Tutsi-led Burundi government forces. The government agreed to peace-keeping talks with rebel forces, but a series of ceasefires were breached. Finally, agreement was reached on a presidential election. Held in 2005, it resulted in the coming to power of a moderate Hutu. Nevertheless, Burundi's political stability was possible only if it was accompanied by peace in Rwanda and Congo.

As in South Africa, Burundi and Rwanda faced political transitions in the early 1990s that could have been seized to promote democratization. Unlike South Africa, however, the two Central African states ended with "aborted transitions" because of a lack of clarity in the transition bargain, a failure of leadership, an obstructionist attitude by opposition forces, and the lack of support for the transition by military forces.¹⁰ Authoritarian governments masked the existence of divided societies. There was no charismatic leader like Nelson Mandela to breach differences, nor was there the political will on the part of key ethnic actors to do so.

International Involvement in Rwanda and Burundi

According to Stephen Stedman, "Africa's conflicts have prompted six different subregional, continental, and international responses, including military support or intervention to aid one side; peace enforcement, to impose a settlement on the warring parties; humanitarian intervention, to ameliorate the effects of war; mediation, to bring conflicts to a negotiated end; preventive diplomacy, to keep incipient conflicts from becoming violent; and regional institution-building, to manage conflicts."¹¹

Third parties were involved in the Central African conflict well before it had spiraled into genocidal violence. The RPF, which had recruited Tutsi refugees who had fled from Rwanda to Uganda, first attacked the Habyarimana regime in 1990. But it was beaten back by Rwandan government forces with military assistance from Belgium, France, and Zaire. Outside military intervention was a fact well before the genocidal events took place.

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The Rwanda conflict spread contagionlike across the border to Burundi. It raised the fear that “similar violence could erupt and provide opportunities for leaders to learn the costs and benefits of violence and the likely responses of the international community.”¹² Contagion also shaped the international response to ethnic conflict in that country. Aware of the Rwandan tragedy of 1994, President Clinton called for “all Burundians to reject extremism and resolve their differences peacefully.” But the United States opted not to exercise preventive diplomacy in Burundi and limited involvement to humanitarian efforts—economic assistance, medical help, and food deliveries channeled through the International Red Cross and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

During the worst of the massacres in mid-1994, few western countries were willing to recognize the fact of genocide in Rwanda. International institutions were equally guilty: the UN Security Council refused to describe what was happening in Rwanda as genocide, referring cryptically instead to “acts” of genocide. This let the UN off the hook because the violence fell outside the scope of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. As late as 1998, the UN Security Council continued to condemn violence in the country, appealed for a cease-fire, and called for the punishment of those responsible for the massacres. But the UN proved ineffective in ending mass slaughter or mediating a resolution to the killings.

UN rejection of the use of peace-enforcement measures was most clearly exemplified in the inattention given to the plea by the Canadian commander of a small contingent of UN peace keepers in Rwanda (United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda [UNAMIR] established in August 1993) for immediate reinforcements. General Romeo Dallaire realized that preparations for mass killings were under way, but his superiors in the UN secretary general’s office in New York were unresponsive, and the United States appeared to be stonewalling as well.¹³ After ten of its peace keepers were killed in fighting with Hutu militias, Belgium pulled its peace keepers out of Rwanda altogether, thereby effectively destroying the UN mission. In turn, nearby French forces did nothing to close down the Hutu radio station that was broadcasting detailed plans for the massacre of Tutsis.

One third party that had the capability to make a difference and prevent genocide was the United States. But the Clinton administration was still smarting from the peace-keeping debacle suffered in Somalia in October 1993. Firefights involving U.S. troops and Somali warlords and their militias claimed twenty-nine American lives. The lesson drawn from this misadventure became known as the “Mogadishu line:” when peace keepers are forced to become combatants, there is cause to end the military mission. President Clinton had no desire to become caught up again in a complex ethnic conflict in a weak African state. Spiraling ethnic conflicts in Europe—in the Balkans—were enough of a challenge to his divided foreign policy team. This is not to say that the United States played no role in Rwanda. The U.S. ambassador to Rwanda after the genocide had been perpetrated claimed that the United States lent support to the RPF to regain power from Hutu extremists, then to attack Hutu camps in eastern Congo.¹⁴

It took several years for efforts at peace and reconciliation in Rwanda and Burundi to take shape. One option that was ruled out was the creation of two ethnically defined new states replacing Rwanda and Burundi, to be called Uhutu and Tutsiland. Such a resolution of the conflict (resembling the way the 1995 Dayton agreement reorganized Bosnia Herzegovina, which we discuss in the next chapter) would have required extensive ethnic resettlement and further demarcation of peoples whose identity was not that dissimilar.

BOX 8.1**Theorizing the Linkage Between Ethnic Conflicts and Outside Involvement in Rwanda*****Complementary Perspectives from Comparative Politics and International Relations*****Hutu Versus Tutsi Conflict in Rwanda****1. Domestic factors**

Weak state
 Hutu political grievances
 Tutsi military domination in Hutu-majority state

2. International factors

Demonstration effect of Burundi ethnic conflict
 Tacit Belgian and French support for Hutu-led government

Tutsi kin in neighboring states (Burundi, Congo, Uganda)

3. Conflict resolution

Negligible third-party mediation, preventive diplomacy, or peace enforcement
 Alleged unsuitability of international law (1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide)
 International institutions' role in creating transitional justice regimes after mass killings ended

The most significant measures taken in the aftermath of the conflicts were the work of external actors (Box 8.1). A United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was set up to try war crimes. In 1998, a former Rwandan prime minister was convicted for inciting the 1994 genocide and sentenced to life imprisonment. In 2008, the mastermind behind the genocide, a chief of staff in Rwanda's defense ministry in 1994, was jailed for life on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. He, together with two other army officers who also were sentenced to life terms, were found guilty of conducting an "organized military operation" that killed hundreds of thousands of Tutsis.

Another judicial institution set up by international actors, modeled loosely on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was the Rwandan National Unity and Reconciliation Commission. Its mission was to identify the perpetrators of the mass killings of Tutsis. Under a system called *gacaca*, named after traditional village courts, the commission authorized the release of nearly all of the estimated 150,000 prisoners into the custody of local judges responsible for the districts where the crimes were committed. Perpetrators were to be classified under a four-tier system of punishment: the masterminds, those who killed in the hundreds, those who killed dozens, and those who provided information on where Tutsis could be found.

Although sentencing guidelines were unclear, as under South Africa's commission, punishment was deliberately not intended to fit the crime. Thus, in Rwanda, people who killed a dozen or fewer people could be sentenced to community service. As unjust as this appeared, it marked a departure from earlier practice where, as one official put it, "in the previous regime, if you killed you were glorified. The culture of hate has been so institutionalized in our system." It also represented a starting

point for the RPF-dominated Rwandan government headed by Kagame (the first Tutsi president in independent Rwanda's history, elected in 2000 by a transitional parliament) to refute charges that it was bent on revenge against the Hutus. It is a "very imperfect system to deal with an impossible situation."¹⁵

In the case of Burundi, South Africa again played a part in the peace-making process. Former president Mandela mediated peace talks among various Tutsi and Hutu groups. In 2000, President Clinton's visit to several African states included a stop in Arusha, Tanzania, to preside over a peace-signing ceremony. The prestige of both Mandela and Clinton was crucial, therefore, in achieving the breakthrough that officially put an end to seven years of bloody conflict, though violence was to continue, at a lower level, in subsequent years.

WORLD WAR IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The conflict in Congo has been called **Africa's first world war** by one western aid agency, a term echoed by former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.¹⁶ While the exact reasons why various outside countries have become involved differ, it seems clear that Congo has become the site of an international battle over natural resources. A UN panel in 2001 said as much when it condemned the plunder of gems and minerals (copper, tin, cassiterite) by external parties; eighty-five companies, including American, Belgian, British, and German ones, were included on a "list of shame"—breaching Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) standards and countenancing human rights abuses so as to make profits from the collapsed Congo state.¹⁷ Not surprisingly, international arms dealers have gained considerably from the conflict. Weapons deliveries have come from former Soviet bloc states as well as the United States, which has also provided military training for some groups.

It should not be surprising, then, that the character of the Congo war has been interpreted in various ways. "The wars of 1996–1997 and 1998–2002 were civil wars, according to some. They were international wars designed to overthrow a dictatorship, according to others. They represent a continuation of Rwanda's Hutu–Tutsi conflict, pursued on Congo soil, for still others. They were resource wars, according to an abundant literature. The intervention of Congo's neighbors, Rwanda and Uganda in particular, were acts of self-defense. These neighbors were pawns of great powers from outside the continent."¹⁸ The periodization of the war is itself subject to disagreement.

The so-called first civil war in Congo in 1996–1997 is easier to categorize than the armed clashes that followed. It can be regarded as a prime example of **conflict contagion**, spreading from Rwanda and Burundi. In particular, Congo's eastern region (referred to as Kivu), became a military theatre for Hutu–Tutsi battles. Capitalizing on the terminal illness of long-ruling Zairean dictator Joseph Mobutu Sese Seko, in 1996 the Tutsi-dominated RPF attacked Hutu refugee camps inside Zaire, claiming that the *Interahamwe* militia had taken refuge there. Soon, however, the RPF joined forces with Zairean rebel groups, and in 1997, deposed the corrupt Mobutu regime, in power for thirty-two years. The new government was headed by Laurent Kabila, who immediately renamed Zaire the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). For a time, he cooperated with RPF forces: A UN team of investigators seeking to discover the fate of thousands of Hutu refugees in Congo who may have been victims of Tutsi reprisal killings was harassed by the Kabila regime in spring 1998.

Democratic Republic of the Congo



Source: Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

Within a year, cooperation between the new regime in Congo and the Tutsis collapsed. Many Congolese insisted that Kabila prove that he had not become a mere puppet of the RPF. Conversely, the RPF leadership accused him of promoting dictatorship and corruption and of harboring the *Interahamwe*, who, it alleged, were preparing to invade Rwanda. Kabila responded by ordering the expulsion of Rwandan and ethnic Tutsi soldiers located in the east of his country, even though they had helped bring him to power. These troops resisted and, together with Ugandan-based rebel groups, instead launched an offensive. They captured the country's third largest city, Kisangani, and moved close to the capital, Kinshasa. Kabila's regime survived only because a group of southern African countries—Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, together with Chad—sent troops to keep the country from falling apart. In radio broadcasts, the Congolese president now inveighed against the Tutsis, saying that they should be wiped out “before they make slaves of us.”

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Africa specialist Ali Mazrui had written that “if Zaire can avoid collapsing into chaos in the near future, it will be one of the major actors in Africa in the twenty-first century, taking Burundi and Rwanda under its wing.”¹⁹ Remarkably, by 1998, it appeared that Tutsi-ruled Rwanda had taken vast Zaire under its wing. What had started off as mass killings orchestrated by ethnic entrepreneurs in Rwanda had become transformed into a battle for control among many African states for the continent’s third largest country—one the size of all of western Europe.

A report prepared in 2000 by Amnesty International described the way that the Congolese people had become the primary victims of the civil war that had also attracted external involvement. There had been

a catalogue of human rights abuses and suffering that the people of the DRC have been subjected to since August 1998 by forces whose foreign and Congolese political and military leaders claim to be fighting for security or sovereignty. In reality, many of the leaders are involved in a fight for political and economic control of the DRC. Amnesty International has concluded that these leaders are perpetrating, ordering or condoning atrocities on a large and systematic scale, and deliberately violating people’s individual and collective right to security and sovereignty.²⁰

Renewed armed conflict broke out in 1998, sparking the so-called second civil war that lasted until 2003. The war encompassed tribal conflicts, rival ethnic militias, and gang warfare—often with neighboring countries supporting opposing sides.²¹ An estimated 5.5 million people perished from war-related causes. The majority were women, children, and the elderly, who died of starvation or disease. Over 1 million people had been driven from their homes, and a large proportion of these were beyond the reach of humanitarian organizations. Another half a million had fled the country.

African states involved in the Congo conflict were implicated in many human rights abuses. Here is a case in point: while the official pretext given for the deployment of a 20,000-strong Tutsi-controlled Rwandan army in eastern Congo was to secure the border from *Interahamwe* attacks, the reality was that it had taken control of Congolese diamond mines and other mineral resources. A follow-up UN panel report in 2003 cited Burundi and Uganda as being involved in developing slave-labor to more quickly and cheaply loot coltan, columbite-tantalite—an indispensable component in computer-based technology, including cell phones, stereos, and DVDs. Multinational corporations were inevitably drawn in as well. An Amnesty International report from 2005 listed companies from Britain, the United States, South Africa, Israel, and eastern Europe as sellers of large quantities of arms to rebel militias.

Human rights abuses were to be expected in a lawless state. The assassination of Laurent Kabila in 2001 was a further blow to the establishment of a stable DRC. His successor was his son, Joseph Kabila, who set up a transitional government based on power sharing, and made some inroads in limiting the second civil war. Often this required “striking deals with the devil”—for example, appointing rebel warlords who headed ethnic militias (“ethnic self-defense groups” was the name they preferred) but who were accused of mass killings and rape, to top government and national army positions. This cooptation process was widened in 2007 when combatants loyal to eastern Congo rebel leader Nkunda were integrated into the national army in a process called **mixage**. However, many continued to commit human rights abuses, even in their new uniforms.

A step toward the reconstruction of the DRC state was the adoption by referendum in late 2005 of a constitution that established a democratic presidential republic. The elections the next year were won by sitting president Kabila and his political movement. His main challenger was Jean-Pierre Bemba, one of Congo's richest men and the head of a militia group; he was subsequently arrested by the International Criminal Court for human rights abuses. After the election result was announced, some of his supporters rioted in the capital. Peace-keeping forces from the **MONUC** (Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo) [United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo] had to intervene to stop the disturbances from spreading. This was one of the first important actions taken by MONUC, whose strength within two years was to reach 17,000, making it the United Nations' largest peace-keeping mission in the world.

The Ethnic-Foreign Nexus in Eastern Congo

During this second civil war, much of the fighting, killing, and population displacement centered on the northeastern and eastern regions of Congo where local militias, backed by their respective foreign allies, were based. The complex international alliance system the war spawned—it is hard to think of it as a civil war—was summarized by one scholar this way: “Kabila allied himself with Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia (and to a certain extent with Chad, Libya, and Sudan). Facing them were Rwanda and Uganda (along with Burundi, to a certain extent) and the rebel groups these countries supported.”²²

The outcome of the five-year war was the division of the country into three separate zones. The northern third of the country was dominated by the Ugandan army and its Congolese ally, the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC). The zone in the east was controlled by Tutsi-dominated Rwandan forces and their Congolese supporters. The remaining third of the country was all that the Congolese government forces and their foreign allies had authority over.

THE ITURI CONFLICT. The DRC's greatest success was in regaining a measure of central government control over the resource-rich **Ituri District** in northeastern Congo. By 2008, most armed groups operating there had been disarmed and demobilized. Observers from MONUC provided tactical support for the conflict resolution process. The United Nations Development Corporation and other international development agencies had set up offices in Ituri. To be sure, long-term stability was far from guaranteed. Among factors that could produce a reversion to instability were the return of large numbers of refugees to the district; the uncertain future of demobilized soldiers; the proliferation of small arms; a rise in interethnic tensions as disputes over land broke out afresh; and, of course, control over gold and diamond mines and markets.

Let us begin with the ethnic dimension. Initially it was driven by competing Hema and Lendu claims on land and grazing rights, but there were few signs that it would lead to armed conflict. Belgian colonial rule had favored the Hema, and a *modus vivendi* between the two groups was established under Mobutu's regime. But as central authority imploded after his death, Lendu began to fear that their land rights would be eroded by increased Hema ambitions.

Outside actors soon became involved. Contagion from the conflict in Rwanda and Burundi inclined the Lendu and Hema to adopt Hutu and Tutsi identifications,

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respectively. Although there were no objective grounds for doing so, the salience of ethnic and linguistic identity in Central Africa had been raised by the Rwandan genocide. The practical consequence of remaking ethnic identity was military support from outside the country. Thus, by the late 1990s, the Hutu militia *Interahamwe* had sided with the Lendu umbrella organization, the Nationalist and Integrationist Front (NIF), while it opportunistically pillaged the district's natural resources to finance its own military buildup. In turn, Tutsi-dominated Rwandan forces moved into Ituri to support their new, socially constructed "ethnic kin" and the movement that embodied it, the Hema-dominated Union of Congolese Patriots (UCP). One of the leaders of the UCP, Thomas Lubanga, earned the distinction in 2006 of being the first person ever arrested under an International Criminal Court warrant; the war crime charge was "conscripting and enlisting children under the age of fifteen years and using them to participate actively in hostilities." Tutsi militias, like Hutu ones, exploited the resource-rich district—for example, by exporting gold illegally—and transferred some of the revenue to Rwanda to finance the modernization of its national army.²³

Northeast Congo borders both Uganda and Sudan, where long-running civil and ethnic strife has occurred. As the Mobutu regime entered its final days, Uganda—and Rwanda—moved forces into the region to help overthrow the ailing dictator. But in 1998, Mobutu's successor, Laurent Kabila, turned on both neighboring countries: he dismissed all Tutsi ministers from his government and demanded that Rwandan and Ugandan forces leave the DRC, accusing them of pillaging and looting the country's resources. Neither country complied. In the case of Uganda, support was thrown behind an anti-Kabila rebel group called the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), headed by Jean-Pierre Bemba. Following democratic elections in 2006 won by Joseph Kabila, the Uganda-backed MLC became Congo's official opposition party and Bemba, runner-up in the presidential election, was appointed vice president. But fighting on the streets of Congo's capital, Kinshasha, between supporters of the rivals, and continued warfare in northeast Congo between government forces and the MLC, made the Kabila-Bemba alliance untenable. As Uganda's influence in the DRC waned, Bemba fled the country in 2007. A year later, he was arrested in Belgium on an International Criminal Court warrant for war crimes and preparations got under way for his trial. While he had been in command of his rebel force, Bemba had even been accused of presiding over acts of cannibalism of his enemies.²⁴

Ugandan forces had come under international pressure to withdraw from the Ituri District. Human Rights Watch charged the forces of acting as "both arsonist and fireman" in Ituri: "During its four years occupying the northeastern DRC, the Ugandan army claimed to be a peacemaker in a region torn by ethnic strife. In reality, the Ugandan army provoked political confusion and created insecurity in areas under its control. From its initial involvement in a land dispute between the Hema and Lendu, the Ugandan army more often aggravated than calmed ethnic and political hostilities."²⁵ In 2003, most Ugandan government forces withdrew, reportedly taking with them some \$10 million in gold.

The DRC took Uganda to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for what it viewed as an illegal occupation, human rights abuses, and exploitation of the region's natural resources. The ICJ's ruling in 2005 sided with the DRC: Uganda had violated Congo's sovereignty by invading it; by providing military, logistical, and financial backing of the MLC rebels; by carrying out human rights abuses, including killings, torture, and deployment of child soldiers; and by looting of gold, diamonds

and silver. The ICJ ordered Uganda to “make reparation for the injury caused”—the sum was to be negotiated between the two states, but the DRC had demanded that \$10 billion be paid in compensation. International law is rarely able to enforce sanctions applied to a country, and forcing Uganda to pay reparations seems unlikely in the near future. Similar judgments are pending elsewhere in the world, and the best that can be expected is a set of political settlements and tradeoffs by the governments that are parties to a dispute—not payouts.

When Uganda withdrew its forces in 2003, the resulting power vacuum prompted UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to call for a multinational force to be deployed to Ituri District that would reinforce a skeletal MONUC mission there. In 2003, the Security Council authorized the deployment of an Interim Emergency Multinational Force (IEMF), and France was put in charge. Within three years, UN peace-making operations, together with Congolese government cooptation of some of the top rebel commanders for service in the national army, had reduced violence in Ituri.

There is another aspect to the DRC–Uganda confrontation in Ituri that only indirectly involves a state-to-state conflict. Since 1987, a religious Christian sect organized around the Acholi ethnic group has been active in northern Uganda. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony, a self-described “voice of God,” has fought to establish a theocracy in Uganda and in adjacent parts of the DRC and Sudan. Over the last two decades, some of Africa’s worst human rights abuses, which include barbaric killings, mutilation, kidnappings, and enslavement, have been attributed to the LRA. Uganda government forces have pressed offensives against the LRA in the north of the country as well as in neighboring Congo. The LRA has accused the Ugandan government of using the pretext of an LRA presence in Congo (which it denies) to maintain Ugandan forces in the resource-rich region. During Christmas celebrations in 2008, several hundred Catholics were butchered by the LRA in a village in northeastern Congo. The LRA’s home base appeared now to be in northeast Congo, although its fighters were active in four other neighboring states. Not surprisingly, in 2009 the DRC army joined with Ugandan and Sudanese forces to hunt down LRA militia units.

The northeastern border of the DRC with Uganda and Sudan has represented an ethnic powder keg. Overlapping ethnic, religious, and civil conflict in one country has appeared inevitably to spill over into another. One country’s confrontation between government and rebel armies swiftly becomes the entire region’s dispute.

CONFLICT IN KIVU. Compared to Ituri, the DRC central government has had less success in regaining authority over its eastern region. Battles continued into 2009 in the Kivu provinces of eastern Congo, pitting the DRC national army against rebel forces made up of Congolese Tutsis and rebel soldiers from eastern Congo who had previously served in the Congolese national army.

The commander of the Tutsi-dominated National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) was Laurent Nkunda, a charismatic military strategist who simultaneously earned the admiration of many western officials for being a strongman in a weak state, and the condemnation of Human Rights Watch for being a war criminal guilty of repeated atrocities. In 2009, the International Criminal Court continued its investigation of war crimes charges against him, beginning with massacres carried out under his command in 2002 in the eastern Congo city of Kisangani (formerly known as Stanleyville), as well as in other areas captured by his forces.

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But Nkunda seemed to have apologists in the West. Claiming to be a Seventh Day Adventist minister and enjoying close ties with American Pentecostal groups, the Tutsi commander also controlled much of eastern Congo's natural resources, including coltan and tin ore. Multinational electronic corporations, among others, were reluctant to offend him, and Anglo-American media coverage had generally presented a positive view of him. In late 2008, one American journalist described how Nkunda cultivated the image of a statesman-in-waiting but warned that "beneath the veneer lies a ruthlessness of a piece with Congo's unbroken history of brutality."²⁶ Indeed, by 2008, the CNDP's military successes in Kivu had persuaded him that his forces could even bring down Kabila's government in Kinshasha, a thousand miles away.

The reputation of the military coalition opposing Nkunda was as tarnished. Government forces were repeatedly accused of ransacking and raping in towns they entered. In 2008, they took the eastern city of Goma and pillaged it, allegedly in the presence of UN peace keepers who did nothing to stop it. MONUC's armed forces—over half of whom are South Asian (Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani)—took part in the government offensive, raising questions about its peace-keeping role and neutrality. Worse, there were accusations leveled at MONUC units of sexual abuse of civilians. Finally, MONUC was blamed for not acting to arrest Nkunda, whose whereabouts they knew.

Arguably the most unsavory militia in eastern Congo, and ally of the Congolese army, was one organized by Hutu extremists. Called the Les Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda [Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR)], many members had been implicated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and had fled to eastern Congo. The DRC–*Interahamwe* alliance had exacerbated relations between the DRC and Rwanda, and the FDLR's presence in eastern Congo continued to create tension. It had not renounced its political aim of returning to power in Rwanda. In the interim, the FDLR continued to be well armed and controlled access to precious minerals in Kivu like cassiterite, coltan, and gold. Moreover, in 2009 "with the rebel group deeply implanted in the forests and mountains of DR Congo, those weapons are also used to extort taxes and minerals from local diggers and traders, reaping profits worth millions of dollars a year."²⁷

The repeated military failures of government forces in eastern Congo appeared to leave president Kabila with one option—to negotiate with Nkunda and his Rwandan allies. An important breakthrough was recorded in late 2008 with an agreement between the Rwandan and DRC governments to disband the FDLR militia. Nkunda had long insisted that it was this notorious group of Hutu extremists that had compelled his rebel army to widen its control over north Kivu. The DRC government's commitment to disband the FDLR seemed to reflect the shift in the balance of military power in east Congo toward Nkunda's forces. But a wild card factor turned out to be senior officers in the CNDP who turned against Nkunda in early 2009, declared an end to the hostilities, and joined the Congolese army. The appeal of mixage and the incentives it provided—exchanging the position of a rebel commander for a senior post in the national army—seemed to be growing as a conflict resolution mechanism. As for Nkunda, a joint Congolese-Rwandan operation launched to track down Rwandan Hutu militiamen operating in the DRC captured the rebel leader in January 2009. The pro-Tutsi warlord was reportedly being held in Rwanda and it was uncertain that he would be extradited to the DRC, which had issued an international arrest warrant for him.

The increasing presence of MONUC troops in eastern Congo seemed to be Congo's best hope for regaining influence over all parts of the country, including the eastern breakaway region. Congo took heart from a UN panel's formal charge in 2008 against the Rwandan government that it had engaged in blatant military involvement on the DRC's territory. Rwandan authorities denied the charge and described the report as "a calculated move to shift blame away" from Congo and the international community, "both of whom have failed to resolve the conflict." The paradox was that international resolution of conflicts in the DRC had to be based on a condemnation of outside countries' interference in internal Congolese affairs.

International Mediation in the Congo Conflict

Conflict in the Congo became internationalized in three distinct ways: (1) the Tutsis who had routed the Hutus in Rwanda and Burundi seemed intent on building an empire, and ethnic Tutsi leaders of Rwanda were seen as the masterminds of a Tutsi imperial project that would take control of the weak or even collapsed states of the region; (2) the number of African countries with a stake in the region had increased and caused frictions elsewhere on the continent, for example, between Rwanda and Uganda for control of Kisangani, and between a neutral South Africa and a pro-Kabila Zimbabwe; and (3) transnational warlord actions exploited ethnic differences for the benefit of militia leaders, as in the case of Nkunda in Kivu. Often these leaders were politically—and sometimes even ethnically—agnostic and had no deep commitments to any cause.

Hope for a resolution of the Congo conflict had risen with the signing of a ceasefire agreement in Lusaka, Zambia, in 1999. The principal international parties to the conflict—Congo, Angola, Uganda, Rwanda, Namibia, and Zimbabwe—accepted the accord, as did the anti-Kabila rebel groups operating inside Congo and who controlled about one-third of the country. In 2000, the UN Security Council authorized deployment of a 5,000-strong peace-keeping force, but fighting in eastern Congo continued. Later that year, the five foreign African armies present in the Congo met in Maputo, Mozambique, under the leadership of South African President Thabo Mbeki, and pledged to pull their forces from the DRC (the various rebel groups operating within the Congo did not participate). The withdrawals were to be supervised and monitored by MONUC. But it took several years before the international community gave this U.N. force sufficient authority, personnel, and equipment to deal with the crisis.

In 2004, to stem the tide of regional violence and instability, the United States helped launch the so-called tripartite process. Its institutional form was the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, which included the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi. Its missions were to encourage cooperation among these countries as well as to enhance regional security. In 2005, a summit of the **African Union**, the successor to the Organization of African Unity, promised to help the DRC disarm militias operating in the country. In 2007, a bilateral agreement between the DRC and Rwanda resulted in the Nairobi communiqué—a joint commitment to resolve the presence of the FDLR in eastern Congo.

In early 2008, the government of the DRC signed a ceasefire agreement with twenty-two armed groups in the eastern town of Goma. It followed the government's failed offensive in eastern Congo a few months earlier. The United States actively encouraged rebel forces to accept the Goma agreement, and it offered the

BOX 8.2**Theorizing the Linkage Between Ethnic Conflicts and Outside Involvement in Congo*****Complementary Perspectives from Comparative Politics and International Relations*****Central Government Versus Regional/Ethnic Militias in Congo****1. Domestic factors**

Fragmenting state

Ethnic and linguistic diversity

Instrumentalist use of ethnic identities to create militias

Extensive natural resources

2. International factors

Contagion of conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi

Third-party military interventions of multiple African states

Economic interests of multinational corporations

3. Conflict resolution

Diplomatic initiatives by select African states (especially South Africa)

Expanding peace-keeping role of UN Mission in Congo

International Criminal Court threat to indict rebel leaders

DRC government support for its peace initiative for eastern Congo. Called the Amani program, its strategy for restoring peace in the region was through demobilization and reintegration of all the armed groups into the national army.

Since 1997, Congo has veered from being a consolidated to a weak, to a fragmented, and even to a collapsed state—and then back in the reverse direction. The combination of a weak central government, regional ethnic militias, foreign armies, abundant natural resources, and the presence of multinational corporations have made reconstructing the DRC a daunting task (see Box 8.2). The political stakes in this large African state are high, turning any losers into potential rebel groups. To complicate matters further, the number of stakeholders is high too.

THE DARFUR CONFLICT: A CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS?

The Darfur region in western Sudan captured the world's attention in 2005 when it was poised on the brink of a purportedly ethnically driven humanitarian catastrophe. A quarter of a million people had died as a result of war, famine, and disease. According to the World Health Organization, about 20 percent of the deaths were attributable to direct violence and 80 percent to drought-related diarrhea. Close to 2 million other people had been displaced; a quarter of a million had become refugees in neighboring Chad. The inability of international aid agencies to deliver food and medical supplies to the region, largely the result of the Khartoum government's obstructionist policies, heightened global concern. In the West, sympathy for the beleaguered Christian community in the country spread quickly as news about the conflict became better known.

Sudan



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The origins of the conflict can be found in the devastating famine that affected Sudan in 1987, which in turn was caused partly by a process of desertification of arable lands. The three provinces composing Darfur are largely inhospitable; they range from the sand desert of the eastern Sahara in the north to the barren savannah in the south. Even though life is difficult to support in the region, about 6 million people inhabit the area, mostly crowded in the mountainous central district. A demographic explosion had doubled the population in a twenty-year period. Thus, the battle to control fertile lands is central to the conflict.

Other underlying causes of conflict include economic underdevelopment, widespread illiteracy, and poor infrastructure. The existence of a weak Sudanese state unable to exercise authority over much of the country created an opportunity structure for local political actors to fill the vacuum. The discovery of large oilfields in western and southern Sudan, especially in 2005, led to heightened outside interest in the region, especially on the part of Chinese corporations. Even as the

humanitarian crisis in Darfur deepened, Sudan experienced an investment boom led by French, German, Swiss, and Middle Eastern companies alongside Chinese ones. Drilling for oil was risky, however, as long as armed conflict was taking place in Darfur. The Sudanese government's scorched-earth strategy against Darfur rebels was prompted by the desire to accelerate stability so that multinationals could invest safely. A struggle over energy sources was also integral to the conflict.

Yet other explanations are grounded in a more general and even apocalyptic view. The Darfur conflict has been constructed in racial and ethnic terms as one between Arabs and Africans. It is even seen as a clash of civilizations—a battlefield in the worldwide Arab-led *jihad* against infidels.

The Ethno-religious Dimension: Muslim Arabs Versus Animist Africans

Racial, ethnic, and religious divisions had been behind Sudan's long-running civil war that had raged before the Darfur conflict broke out. It had pitted the northern and southern halves of the country against each other in an armed struggle that had begun in 1955.²⁸ Southern Sudan is inhabited by African ethnic groups, most of which practice different forms of Christianity or **animism**—a belief in the existence of spirits in humans and objects. The north is dominated by Muslim groups and is culturally Arabic (though less so in Darfur).

For decades, different military and political movements in southern Sudan fought for political autonomy. They reportedly received military assistance from Ethiopia, Somalia, and Uganda. The United States too, was said to have shipped military equipment to southern Sudanese rebels in the 1990s, hoping they would overthrow the regime of Omar al-Bashir, a general who took power in a military coup in 1989. The United States placed Sudan on the list of nations sponsoring terrorism as early as 1993, shortly after bin Laden had moved to the country.

The lengthy war was waged mainly in the south. Up to 2 million civilians were killed—making it one of the deadliest conflicts since World War II. Twice as many southerners became refugees across Sudan and in neighboring countries. Rape was used as a strategy of deracination of non-Arab groups. Hundreds of thousands of southerners were put into slavery in the country. The international community, led by the United Nations, expressed increasing horror at the war's toll. After the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, pressure mounted on al-Bashir to distance himself from Islamic fundamentalism.

As the conflict in Darfur began to escalate, al-Bashir reached an agreement with south Sudanese rebels that became formalized in 2005. Its main provisions called for political autonomy to be granted to the south for six years, after which—that is, in 2011—the south would hold a referendum on whether it wished to secede from Sudan (the provision resembled the 1996 Khasavyurt Accord concluded between Russia and Chechnya but which was subsequently nullified by the 1999 Russian invasion). The armed forces of the two sides would be merged if southerners elected to stay in Sudan. Oil revenues from oilfields in the south would be split evenly between the Khartoum and southern governments. Thirty percent of central government posts were to be allotted to southern leaders; the president of the government of south Sudan became the first vice president of the Sudanese national government.

A contentious aspect of the 2005 accord was the status of Sharia law. It was agreed that Islamic law would govern in the north, though a separate controversy

erupted over whether it should be enforced in the capital, where there was significant religious diversity. The accord left it to southern Sudan's assembly to decide if Sharia law would apply in that region. The interim constitution adopted for southern Sudan was ambiguous on the subject. While "legislation applicable to Southern Sudan should be derived from the sources of consensus, customs and values of the people of Southern Sudan," it could be argued that Islamic law should "be applied in the South since religion is part of the customs of some people."²⁹

If the north-south conflict had ended—or at least was put on hold—clashes along similar ethno-religious and racial lines were becoming more frequent in Darfur. They had first erupted into large-scale fighting in the two years that followed the 1987 famine. One side was the Fur, a nominally Sunni Muslim ethnic group whose members widely practice animism. Until Britain conquered their territory and abolished the sultanate in 1916, they had ruled themselves and had successfully resisted **arabization**. In the 1987–1989 war, mostly agrarian Fur were attacked by groups of nomadic Arabs who wanted their land. The Sudanese government had no overt role in this conflict.

One analysis underscored the vicious nature of the strife, seemingly reflecting the primordial animosity of the groups toward each other. The conflict

was marked by indiscriminate killing and mass slaughter on both sides. The language of genocide was first employed in that conflict. The Fur representative at the May 1989 reconciliation conference in El Fasher pointed to their adversaries and claimed that "the aim is a total holocaust and no less than the complete annihilation of the Fur people and all things Fur." In response the Arab representative traced the origin of the conflict to "the end of the '70s when . . . the Arabs were depicted as foreigners who should be evicted from this area of Dar Fur."³⁰

This conflict was subsiding when al-Bashir took power and, for the next twenty years, ruled over a fragmented state. Sudan was racked by regional conflicts, between the north and the south, then in Darfur. Were al-Bashir's policies responsible for the spread and escalation of ethnically anchored conflicts? The International Criminal Court (ICC) seemed to think so. In 2008, it determined that he had played a pivotal role in fanning these conflicts by promoting ethnic and racial polarization. Al-Bashir had categorized the tribes politically aligned with him as Arabs, those opposed as *Zurga*—slang for "dirty blacks." His stated aim was a *Zurga*-free Sudan. The principal "African" groups in western Sudan were the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawas.

In 2008, the ICC prosecutor charged al-Bashir with genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes during his reign. But according to a specialist on the region, the Sudanese president had not invented the wheel—or in this case, Sudan's racial categories. "The racialization of identities in Darfur has its roots in the British colonial period. As early as the late 1920s, the British tried to organize two confederations in Darfur: one Arab, the other black (*Zurga*). Racialized identities were incorporated into the census and provided the frame for government policy. It is not out of the blue that the two sides in the 1987–1989 civil war described themselves as Arab and *Zurga*."³¹

Racialization of identities in Darfur is connected to racism. "In terms of skin color, everybody is black. But the various forms of Sudanese cultural racism distinguish 'zurug' from 'Arab,' even if the skin has the same color."³² To complicate

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matters further, linguistic divisions are crosscutting, so that some of the African tribes have lost their native language and replaced it with Arabic.

Successive ethnic conflicts in Darfur entailed a fight over land, but they could not be reduced solely to ethnic divisions.

The land-grabbing has been a consequence of three different, if related, causes. The first is the colonial system, which reorganized Darfur as a series of tribal homelands, designating the largest for settled peasant tribes and none for fully nomadic tribes. The second is environmental degradation: according to the United Nations Environment Program, the Sahara expanded by 100 kilometers in four decades; this process reached a critical point in the mid-1980s, pushing all tribes of North Darfur, Arab and non-Arab, farther south, onto more fertile Fur and Masalit lands. This in turn led to a conflict between tribes with homelands and those without them. The imperative of sheer survival explains in part the unprecedented brutality of the violence in every successive war since 1987–1989. The third cause came last: the brutal counterinsurgency unleashed by the Bashir regime in 2003–2004 in response to an insurgency backed up by peasant tribes.³³

Another ethnic group involved in the Darfur conflict is the Masalit, who, like the Fur, are a non-Arab Muslim tribe living along the Sudan-Chad border. The policy of arabization first launched by the Sudanese government in the 1970s had hardened the identities of its non-Arab targets, whether black Muslim groups in the south, which assumed an African identity, or the Fur and Masalit in the west, which rebelled against the government's arabization measures. Following a revolt in 2003, the majority of Masalit, one of the poorest groups in the area, were driven from their homes over the next three years. Many ended up in refugee camps in Chad, which a newly created militia of Arab nomads attacked in cross-border raids.

The Zaghawa (who call themselves Beri) were the third African Muslim group of Darfur targeted by Sudanese arabization policy. A dominant ethnicity in neighboring Chad and more devout Muslims than the animist-influenced Fur and Masalit, most of Darfur's Zaghawa were forced to flee their homes and take refuge in camps on the other side of the border.

The conflict between tribes of African farmers and Arab nomads deepened in 2003 when Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa leaders organized two rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The chief grievances they articulated were economic marginalization (therefore reactive ethnicity) and political ostracism within the Arab-ruled state. They also demanded Sudanese government action to stop the attacks carried out by nomadic Arab militia, which had been driven onto African farmlands by desertification and drought.³⁴

In reality, the Arab militia appeared to have been a creation of the government of Sudan. Especially after the 2003 rebellion, which featured armed clashes between government troops and the SLA/M and JEM, al-Bashir decided to construct a third party having Darfur credentials—a loose alliance of nomadic Arab militias on horses and camels. Supplied and backed by the Sudanese army, the so-called *Janjaweed* (“devils on horseback”) developed into a fearsome militia made up of Arab speakers from Darfur and neighboring Chad.³⁵ The SLA/M and

JEM self-defense groups proved no match for the combination of Sudanese armed forces—which unleashed air attacks on the African tribes' villages—and riders on horseback storming out of the desert (though often their chiefs arrive at a battle scene in Land Rovers). A Human Rights Watch report in 2004 graphically captured the clashes:

The government and its *Janjaweed* allies have killed thousands of Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa—often in cold blood—raped women, and destroyed villages, food stocks and other supplies essential to the civilian population. They have driven more than one million civilians, mostly farmers, into camps and settlements in Darfur where they live on the very edge of survival, hostage to *Janjaweed* abuses. More than one million others have fled to neighboring Chad but the vast majority of war victims remain trapped in Darfur.³⁶

The Sudanese government repeatedly denied that it provided material support to the militia, and it construed the *Janjaweed* as a spontaneously formed local counterinsurgency opposed to the African groups' revolt. But in 2008, the pretense was dropped when a militia leader was appointed as minister in al-Bashir's government.

Ecological, economic, and political factors helped spawn the fierce clashes of 2003 and those thereafter, but we should not downplay the part played by race, ethnicity, and religion. The *Janjaweed* were a product of Arab nomads' lengthy battle with black farmers, and in the first decade of the new century, they "cashed in on their strategic positions as agents of the Sudanese government . . . to vent their racial/ethnic anger and hatred on rival African communities with whom they have clashed for decades over economic resources and ethnic/racial differences."³⁷ Although Muslims themselves, they went after the Islamic symbols of the black tribes in Darfur, desecrating their Qur'ans, destroying their mosques, killing their imams.³⁸ The only logical explanation for the intrareligious killing appears to be of an Arab racism that discriminates against black Muslims. The overall silence of the Islamic Middle East states on the Darfur tragedy is significant.

Outside Actors in Sudan

Darfur may represent Exhibit A of the ethnic conflicts that became internationalized. Two global powers in particular have had major stakes in the region, China and the United States, and both involve oil. China's largest overseas oil project has been in western Sudan, where its main energy company extracts crude oil and pumps it through a Chinese-made pipeline to the Red Sea, where tankers then transport it to China's industrial centers. Its rapid industrial growth had made China desperate for energy, and it was prepared to invest in pariah states like Sudan, as well as Angola and Iran, because the West was reluctant to do so.

In return, China became the Sudanese government's largest supplier of arms. Despite a United Nations embargo on supplying weapons to the country, China, together with Russia, provided the Khartoum government with significant military equipment. China's shipments included everything from machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades to tanks, helicopters, and jets. In addition, for Khartoum, "China is in a lucrative partnership that delivers billions of dollars in investment, oil revenue and weapons—as well as diplomatic protection—to a government accused by

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the United States of genocide in Darfur and cited by human rights groups for systematically massacring civilians and chasing them off ancestral lands to clear oil-producing areas.³⁹

The United States has oil stakes in the region as well. Chevron and Exxon operate in oilfields next door, in Chad, and from there use a pipeline to send crude to a Cameroon port on the Atlantic coast. They would like to be able to drill in Darfur, which could become possible if Sudanese government troops were driven out and Chinese contracts nullified. The Bush administration backed the SLA/M forces in Darfur; President Bush even welcomed a top rebel commander in the White House in 2006. Simultaneously, his administration launched an effective propaganda attack accusing the *Janjaweed* of perpetrating genocide and encouraging international military intervention in the area.

The European Union (EU) was more circumspect about trying to resolve a humanitarian crisis through military intervention. It gave higher priority to preventive diplomacy as a tool. France in particular has extensive interests in this part of Africa. It has a military presence in and provides assistance to two countries next to Darfur, the Central African Republic and Chad, to which some of the Darfur fighting spread. In 2008, a rebellion—backed by the Sudanese government—aimed at overthrowing Chad's president (a Zaghawa) was defeated when president Sarkozy declared his intention to deploy French troops while also encouraging the Darfur-based Zaghawa group JEM to stop the Chad rebels. He himself visited Chad shortly after the coup attempt failed. To bring peace to the area, Sarkozy endorsed the UN Security Council's mandate for deployment of a European Union Force (EUFOR Chad/CAR), made up mostly of French forces, in eastern Chad and the northeast Central African Republic.

In 2004, the UN Security Council also mandated a peace-keeping force for Darfur. It began as a small African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), whose task was to protect civilian life. But even when it reached 7,000 in number of troops, it proved ineffective, in large part due to obstruction by the Sudanese government, which labeled it a group of foreign invaders. In response, in 2007, the UN established a new force called the **African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID)**, which was accepted by Khartoum. The plan was for it to reach 26,000 in number, making it the largest UN peace-keeping force in the world. But by the end of 2008, it was half that strength, had been fired upon by Sudanese government forces, and had proved incapable of protecting civilians (see Box 8.3).

The job of assisting the victims of the conflict in Darfur fell to humanitarian agencies. By 2009, Darfur had become the site of the largest humanitarian operation in the world, with about 17,000 aid workers (94 percent of whom are Sudanese) working for eighty-five international aid organizations and sixteen UN agencies.⁴⁰ Yet this vast humanitarian network was able to reach at best 65 percent of the people affected by the strife. As with UNAMID, attacks on humanitarian workers, often by government forces, were commonplace.

Military offensives by Sudanese military and *Janjaweed* militia in 2008 had made Darfur a more violent place than ever. Toward the end of that year, al-Bashir offered an unconditional ceasefire to fighting in Darfur, but it seemed a last-ditch attempt to stall the International Criminal Court's case against him. Indeed, in March 2009 the ICC prosecutor issued an international arrest warrant for him, making al-Bashir the first sitting head of state to be indicted for war crimes. The charges included war crimes and crimes against humanity, but not genocide. To issue an international arrest warrant for a sitting political leader is extraordinary enough, but in al-Bashir's case it was even

BOX 8.3**Theorizing the Linkage Between Ethnic Conflicts and Outside Involvement in Sudan*****Complementary Perspectives from Comparative Politics and International Relations*****Sudanese Central Government Versus Darfur Ethnic Rebel Groups****1. Domestic factors**

Fragmented state
 Primordial racial and ethnic categories
 Overlapping religious cleavage between Muslims and Christians/animists
 Government arabization policies
 Oil fields

2. International factors

Great power interests of China and the United States

Interests of energy corporations
 Illegal arms deliveries from third parties
 Spillover of conflict to neighboring Chad
 Support of Arab states for Sudan's government

3. Conflict resolution

Ineffectiveness of African Union/UN missions in Darfur
 Inability to operationalize international norm of humanitarian assistance to civilians affected by war
 International Criminal Court indictment of the president of Sudan

more exceptional because of the global economic interests and external political actors who stood to lose with his conviction. The Sudanese leader's indictment was opposed by China, Russia, the African Union, the League of Arab States, and the Non-Aligned Movement. Emboldened by such widespread support and charging the ICC with neocolonialism, a defiant al-Bashir responded to the ICC indictment with an international tour of his regional allies which included Eritrea, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia. It was hard not to see a clash of civilizations over the indictment, as over the entire Darfur tragedy.

KEEPING THE STATE STRONG: SOUTH AFRICA

Transitions from authoritarianism do not always go smoothly, as seen in the cases of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. When South Africa emerged out of the oppressive apartheid regime, pessimists believed that the country would be riveted by racial and ethnic strife, weak state structures, and uncompromising political leadership. This forecast has largely proved incorrect. How, then, were ethnic rivalries defused and central authorities given legitimacy in the new South Africa—without the help of external actors?

The collapse of the Soviet bloc in the USSR and that of white-ruled South Africa occurred within two years of each other. The existence of an empire furnishes an obvious point of comparison: "The South African state formed in 1910 was a British empire in microcosm and, without apartheid, was always likely to show the same fissiparous tendencies of the Russian empire without communism."

South Africa



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The consequence in each case was that “[e]thnic politics, so long obscured or concealed, suddenly mattered a great deal.”⁴¹

Transition from Apartheid

Few political systems, anywhere, have ever been based so profoundly on racial and ethnic categories as that of South Africa under **apartheid**. The assumption was that the country’s various black tribes would eventually mature into nations, like Afrikaans and English-speaking whites had done. Until then, the different black groups were to live in designated tribal homelands (or language areas) and townships even though, as a result of wars, uprooting, and relocation, few of them really had an ancestral home. Critics of apartheid argued that ethnicity was an outdated concept and was used in South Africa only to create divisions.

The transition from apartheid to black majority rule in the early 1990s represented a struggle for power among the country's black peoples, who made up about 75 percent of the total population (whites represented 14 percent; mixed race, or coloreds, nearly 9 percent; and Indians 2.5 percent). When President F. W. de Klerk announced his initiative for democratic reform, it was to the **African National Congress (ANC)** and its imprisoned leader, Nelson Mandela, that he turned. Privileged by the overture, ANC leaders—most of whom belonged to the Xhosa group—refused to include a representative of the Zulus—a historic, large, and influential nation in South Africa since the times of King Shaka in the early nineteenth century.

Even before the democratic breakthrough, one African specialist stressed how Xhosa and Zulu “occupy polar positions on some key questions of ethnic identity, ideology, organizational affiliation, leadership preferences, and strategic inclinations.” More than that, “one of these groups is significantly overrepresented and the other underrepresented in the leading extraparliamentary opposition organizations.”⁴² This classic grievance has mobilized many a secessionist movement, and there was reason to believe that a new democratic South Africa's first challenge would be to manage the threat of separatism.

What, then, were the supposed differences between the two groups? The languages they speak are related and, as with the other seven African languages given official constitutional status (along with Afrikaans and English), belong to the Bantu group. Of South Africa's population of about 45 million, more than one-fifth is Zulu (over 9 million) compared with about 7 million Xhosas (many of whom also speak English). Zulus are concentrated in South Africa's most populous province, KwaZulu-Natal, and Xhosas have settled near the Cape. For one observer, the most important difference between the groups was that they had different political cultures. “The Xhosa-speakers of the Cape were the most politically aware Africans in the country, having grown up within a relatively liberal environment in which a qualified franchise had long been available. . . . Zulu-speakers were conservative, even parochial, by comparison.”⁴³ At the time that the Union of South Africa was created in 1910, there were already 12,000 blacks and coloreds registered as voters in the Cape, but only a handful in Natal. The implication was that Zulus lagged behind Xhosa in democratic culture. For Xhosas, it seemed natural, therefore, that they should constitute the core group in the new democracy.

The shift from white minority to black majority rule entailed many changes, above all, constitutional ones. The 1996 constitution (which came into effect in 1997) began with a preamble asserting that South Africa “belongs to all who live in it”—a choice of an unproblematic identity and marking a stark contrast to the apartheid system. It formally established nine non-ethnically-defined provinces, all of which had black majority populations, except for the Western Cape. The constitution acknowledged the institution of traditional indigenous leaders and recognized the principle of self-determination for all groups within the country. But its commitment to an inclusive democracy did not go so far as to embrace federalism. Whereas provincial legislatures were elected, the chief executives of provinces were appointed by the central government. Provinces' powers were enumerated while the central government had both designated powers as well as residual ones not specified by the constitution. The constitution precluded any asymmetrical arrangement that would give special status to the Zulus.⁴⁴ Clearly, the specter of federal systems collapsing or under strain in various parts of the world in the early 1990s influenced how the new South African system was designed.

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Political reform meant that the tribal homelands had to be dismantled. These tribal homelands, including the semiautonomous kingdom of KwaZulu, had been set up under the 1953 Bantu Authorities Act to “train” the Bantu for self-government while moving them away from white-populated areas and denying them citizenship. An “independent” KwaZulu proclaimed in 1972 consisted of forty-four pockets of land on both sides of the Tugela river—a “polka-dot state,” in the words of Mangosuthu Buthelezi, head of the Zulu nationalist organization **Inkatha**, originally a cultural organization for Zulus set up in the 1920s. It was a fraction of the size of Shaka’s kingdom but, nevertheless, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) made use of the bantustan to monopolize government.

Black majority rule in South Africa eliminated the homelands and, with them, fiefdoms of power and patronage established by homeland rulers. When South Africa’s first general election was scheduled for 1994, Inkatha, having lost its privileged status in KwaZulu, threatened to boycott it. The threat deepened the rupture between the ANC, led by Mandela, and Inkatha, headed by Buthelezi. Although it would be oversimplifying to describe the ANC as a multiethnic movement and Inkatha as a Zulu one, it is also true that, in the 1994 election, Inkatha invoked the grand history of the Zulus while the ANC emphasized the future that all blacks in South Africa would build together.

The two groups had pursued different strategies under apartheid. The ANC waged an armed struggle against the government in the hope of making South Africa ungovernable. Inkatha concentrated its efforts on a negotiated solution. After the democratic transition, Inkatha allied itself with opponents of change, ranging from bantustan leaders to representatives of the white Afrikaaner right. This discredited Inkatha more than did the ANC’s acceptance of Soviet and Cuban backing and its inclusion of communist leaders within its ranks during the antiapartheid struggle.

In the 1994 election, the ANC–Inkatha rivalry was transformed into violent clashes between black groups. Many black townships in KwaZulu-Natal became war zones, where Inkatha organized anti-ANC rallies. ANC officials, in turn, portrayed Buthelezi as a Zulu nationalist who was undermining the construction of a new South Africa. For one historian, he “was a mass of paradoxes, a Christian who honored African tradition and an avowed democrat who yet clearly distrusted the ballot. Urbane and charming, with connections in the boardrooms of Western corporations, he could, in a moment, turn from avuncularity to the language of tribal war.”⁴⁵

Inkatha leaders did not see Mandela as the conquering hero depicted in the West. To be sure, shortly after his release from prison in 1990, after serving twenty-seven years, Mandela visited Durban to quell political violence and was hailed by tens of thousands of Zulus. He had still not met Buthelezi but apparently agreed to make concessions to the Zulus: There would be formal recognition of KwaZulu and its king in the new constitution. One scholar observed, however, “[t]o recognize nationalism below the level of an inclusive Black nationalism is to run afoul of an important South African taboo.”⁴⁶

Mandela fudged and agreed in principle that Inkatha leaders could seek international mediation over the province’s status at some later date. This promise was empty because it was obvious that black South Africans would be deciding their future on their own, without outside involvement. One South African newspaper even praised Mandela for his duplicity: “It is almost reassuring to note among the blemishes on his track record the renegeing on solemn promises made to the Inkatha Freedom Party before the previous elections to invite foreign mediation in the problem of endemic violence in KwaZulu-Natal.”⁴⁷

The results of the 1994 elections produced the expected victory for the ANC. Mandela was appointed by the legislature to become the country's first black president. But Inkatha did not fare poorly: despite organizing its campaign at the last minute, it gained 11 percent of the vote nationwide, winning forty-three seats compared with 252 by the ANC and eighty-two by the Nationalists. This entitled it to three of twenty-seven cabinet posts. Inkatha entered into a power-sharing agreement with the ANC, and Buthelezi was appointed to the cabinet. As for the election to the KwaZulu-Natal legislature, Inkatha defeated the ANC handily by a 50 percent to 32 percent margin.

Ethnicity, State Building, and the International System

Shortly after the 1994 elections, Buthelezi withdrew from South Africa's Constitutional Assembly, which was responsible for drafting a new constitution. He accused Mandela of failing to honor the promise of allowing for international mediation of the question of federalism. By this point, Mandela had begun an all-out campaign in favor of a single South African identity. He preached national reconciliation and sought an end to political violence. In 1996, he achieved success on both fronts as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (the commission's work was concluded in 2001). Political violence ended abruptly at that time (see Box 8.4).

In 1999, just prior to South Africa's second free election, the quarrel between the ANC and Inkatha was patched up. An estimated 12,000 people had been killed in clashes between rival supporters since 1985, and the new accord established a code of conduct for the election and even envisaged a joint election rally involving the ANC's Mbeki (who had succeeded Mandela) and Chief Buthelezi. Although the rally never took place, for the first time, each party was able to campaign in some of the strongholds of the other in KwaZulu-Natal.

BOX 8.4

Theorizing the Linkage Between Ethnic Diversity and Outside Interest in South Africa

Complementary Perspectives from Comparative Politics and International Relations

Xhosa Versus Zulu Political Competition

1. Domestic factors

- Legitimacy of the postapartheid state
- Recognition of political pluralism
- Quality of transition leadership
- Transitional justice regime
- African National Congress as all-South Africa party

2. International factors

- Demonstration effect of failure of federal system (the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia)
- Demonstration effect of tragedy of ethnocracies (Balkans)

3. Conflict resolution

- International backing for South Africa's political transition

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Inkatha itself was being transformed in the process of South African democratization. Its new logo was a family of elephants symbolizing “unity in diversity.”⁴⁸ Its campaign program now stressed a pan-South African program and accused the ANC of having “no answers for the future.” It claimed that South Africa was “deeply troubled. By unemployment. By crime. By poverty. By disease. By corruption. By a breakdown in the social fabric. By a lack of discipline. By a lack of respect for others. By indolence. In key respects, South Africa is not being governed properly and is becoming, and has at times already become, ungovernable.” In sum, “life is getting rougher and tougher for all South Africans,” and Buthelezi exhorted: “If the government of the day can’t cope, then it is time to change the government. It’s time for a government that will make South Africa governable. It’s time for the IFP.”⁴⁹

The ANC’s overwhelming victory nationwide in 1999 was tempered by its one regional loss—in KwaZulu-Natal to Inkatha. The ANC won 66 percent of the national vote and was one seat short of a two-thirds legislative majority. Inkatha, which had placed second in 1994, obtained 9 percent of the vote (and thirty-four seats), behind the 10 percent (thirty-eight seats) registered by the Democratic Party (formerly the Progressive Party, which had been the lone parliamentary voice opposing apartheid). Even with the poorer performance, Buthelezi and two IFP colleagues were appointed to Mbeki’s cabinet. In the KwaZulu-Natal provincial election, the IFP edged out the ANC by 41 to 40 percent.

The ANC’s message proclaiming a single new South African identity received even greater backing in the 2004 election. It captured 70 percent of the vote (and 279 of the 400 seats); Inkatha was down to 7 percent (twenty-eight seats). More surprising was that, for the first time, the ANC defeated Inkatha on its home turf: in the KwaZulu-Natal legislative election, the ANC got 47 percent of the vote (and thirty-eight seats) compared with the IFP’s 37 percent (thirty seats). Even as the ANC tactfully offered a power-sharing agreement to Inkatha in the province, Buthelezi accused the ANC of seeking to create a single-party state across South Africa. That appeared to be the logical result of a policy underscoring South African unity.

It was ironic, then, that the ANC itself became increasingly disunified. At a party convention in 2007, Jacob Zuma was elected head of the party over Mbeki. Two years earlier, Zuma had been charged with both corruption and rape, charges viewed by many as politically motivated to stop his bid for the ANC leadership; they were subsequently dropped. It was even alleged that Mbeki had attempted to have them reinstated, but he was subsequently cleared by a court of meddling in the Zuma affair.

A more populist and leftist politician than Mbeki, Zuma made the redistribution of South Africa’s wealth to favor the poor one of his priorities. He scared some in his own party with the militaristic theme of his personal anthem, *Umsbini wami* (“Bring me my machine gun”). But it did not in any way symbolize his policy on ethnic groups: Zuma himself was a Zulu who had joined the ANC in 1959 and had risen to become the highest Zulu figure in the party. He was popular in KwaZulu-Natal and seemed poised to sap Inkatha’s electoral strength even further in the 2009 elections.

The political divide created by Zuma’s election to the ANC leadership resulted in the setting up of a new South African political party. In late 2008, the Congress of the People (COPE) was established by disaffected ANC members unhappy with Zuma. Led by Mosiuoa Lekota, its platform supported a free-market economy as well as multiracial governance. Inkatha head Buthelezi welcomed COPE’s formation on the grounds that it would end one-party domination in South Africa. But the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African

Trade Unions condemned the splinter party and suggested it amounted to political suicide by the ANC.

That warning proved to be unjustified. The Zuma-led ANC captured two-thirds of the vote in the April 2009 parliamentary election and won 264 seats—just shy of a two-thirds majority in the 400-seat national assembly and only slightly down on its 2004 showing. Helen Zille's Democratic Alliance finished second with a 17 percent share of the electorate and 67 seats. It also wrested control of the Western Cape legislature, based in Cape Town, from the ANC. The province has a sizeable white population, is one of the economically better off parts of the country, and is home to a thriving tourist industry.

Lekota's much-touted ANC-splinter party COPE was repudiated at the polls, taking just 7 percent of the vote and 30 seats. Inkatha's ranks were reduced to just 18 seats. In the KwaZulu provincial legislature, it also won only 18 seats, compared to 51 for the ANC and 7 for the Democratic Alliance. Zuma had delivered the Zulu vote to the ANC.

Two weeks after the election, the National Assembly elected Zuma as South Africa's president. The more radical, egalitarian, populist platform that he had embraced may have suggested that the ANC was becoming a more left-wing party. But early in his presidency, Zuma struck a moderate tone and avoided both the politics of class and that of ethnicity.

South Africa has consolidated its democracy with no real outside support: it is a remarkable achievement of the diverse peoples that make up the once-troubled country. The international standing of Mandela certainly gave him leverage in promoting ethnic harmony in the country. But without this advantage, Mbeki also succeeded in keeping the ethnic peace, even though in other respects, for example, the UN's Human Development Index, South Africa was doing poorly. Political transitions in multiethnic states, then, do not always lead to weak states and ethnic strife.

Conclusion

We have considered the relations between ethnic groups in central, northeastern, and South Africa. There are also other complicated disputes based on ethnic lines on the continent: in Angola, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Somalia, and Kenya. Mazrui has argued that the UN can make a bigger difference in Africa, where the stakes in human lives is high, than elsewhere: "Even its 'failed' enterprise in Somalia probably saved more lives than its 'success story' in Cambodia."⁵⁰ Yet it was precisely during the terms of two African secretaries general of the UN, Boutros-Boutros Ghali and Kofi Annan, that so many ethnicized wars broke out in Africa and could not be contained. Mazrui echoed the position of many policymakers, including those in the United States, that "Africans must establish an African peace enforced by Africans."⁵¹ But neither in Congo nor Sudan was it effective.

In contrast, other analysts have taken a more sanguine view and have pointed to fading support for a global humanitarian agenda. "Given the half-hearted response to the horrors of Rwanda, it is not too farfetched to think that humanitarian issues are becoming more theater than reality for most of the developed world."⁵² Outside parties are most likely to intervene in ethnicized conflicts when their own national interests can be advanced. Selfless commitment to the international mediation of such conflicts, no matter how horrific they may be, remains a rare occurrence in contemporary international politics.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the characteristics of weak states? How do ethno-nationalist groups exploit the weakness of central authorities to advance their own political autonomy? Are these dynamics limited to states in Africa?
2. Do ethnic identities alone explain the atrocities committed by Hutus and Tutsis against each other in Rwanda and Burundi in the 1990s? Which third parties were in a position to make a difference and limit the conflict at an early stage?
3. How did Congo become the battleground for Hutu–Tutsi clashes? Which other part of the DRC became ethnically divided and drew in outside states? Discuss how ethnic and political divisions overlapped.
4. Is the war in Darfur better explained as a racial rather than ethnic or religious conflict? Why have the world's great powers played a part in a conflict set in a remote part of the Sahara?
5. How did postapartheid South Africa construct national unity out of a multinational state? Explain why South Africa did not need external assistance to promote unity.

Key Terms

African National Congress (ANC)	conflict contagion	Congo) [United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo]
African Union	Hutus	mixage
African Union–UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID)	Inkatha	Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)
Africa's first world war animism	<i>Interabamwe</i>	Tutsis
apartheid	Ituri District	weak states
arabization	<i>Janjaveed</i>	
Biafra	MONUC (Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du	

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