POWER SHARING AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION IN ETHNIC CONFLICTS

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Foreword

The horrors of ethnic violence defy the imagination: Mass murder, rape, and wanton destruction of places of worship and universities carried out in some cases by people who had lived together peacefully. The world watches, seemingly helpless before the overwhelming force of hatred, and asks the inevitable question: "Couldn't someone have done something to prevent this?"

People who have devoted their lives to the study of ethnic conflict have sought answers to three components of this large question: What political conditions drive people to violence? What conditions allow people to settle their differences peacefully? What is the role of the international community when relations between groups become violent? Scholars have developed theories of ethnic conflict and of political institutions that can manage conflict and prevent the turn to violence. They have extracted principles from a comprehensive study of past conflicts and moments where conflicts have been avoided, and they have presented their results to policymakers, hoping that the principles will guide foreign policy.

Yet, scholars notice that policymakers are often bored by these theoretical discussions. It is as if the scholar and policymaker are from two different cultures that thrive on different types of information. The scholar looks backward to find lessons; the policymaker looks ahead and often must improvise. The scholar can wait until all the facts are in; the policymaker cannot. The time horizon of the scholar may be years; the horizon of the policymaker, weeks, days, or hours. Scholars complain that policymakers' decisions are *ad hoc* and without a strategy informed by scholarship. Policymakers say that they often have no choice.

In Timothy Sisk's path-breaking study, copublished by the United States Institute of Peace and the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, scholarship bridges the gap to policymaking. This is the first study to apply theories of democracy in multiethnic societies to international mediation aimed at preventing or stopping ethnic violence.

As Sisk's work notes, in deeply divided societies, where fear and ignorance are often driving forces of ethnic conflict, people tend to identify themselves by their ethnic group, the defining characteristic of the society. Such societies can ignite in violence especially when there is inequality among ethnic groups and discrimination against one or more groups, and when discrimination is reinforced by public policy.

To avoid violence political institutions must allow ethnic groups to participate in the political process and they must protect human rights. Rather than feeling fearful, ethnic groups will feel valued in such a society.

The power-sharing arrangements laid out in this book can help lead divided societies toward a stable democracy and away from violence. Power sharing , appropriately structured, can encourage moderation and discourage extremism. It can be based on politicians' self-interest: They will do whatever is needed to get elected.

Power sharing can begin a profound movement of the society away from ethnicity as the strongest identifier. Coalitions may form along ethnic lines at the outset, but ideology or class may become more important. People feel strongly about ideology and class but they are less likely to defend themselves to the death than ethnic extremists. Power sharing has been successful in some societies but ineffective in others. It was essential in the peaceful change of government in South Africa. Without an agreement on transitional power sharing, the conflict over apartheid may not have been brought to an end, or a new round of killing may have occurred. Yet a power-sharing pact in Rwanda did not prevent genocide. For this reason the book focuses on the conditions under which the international community should promote power-sharing efforts to prevent deadly conflict.

The lessons of this work are for the leaders of deeply divided societies and for the international community attempting to prevent conflict. All too often international mediation deals with the *process* of political change: Is it peaceful or violent? Mediators want to stop the violence by any means possible. The international community must be more involved in shaping the institutions that will ensure an enduring peace -- the *outcomes* of political change. It needs to be involved early and address what may be the most important question: Is power sharing necessary, and possible, in this society or is separation a better course? Prescriptions are not possible because every situation is different. The value of this book is in the range of options presented to policymakers.

A number of Institute of Peace activities and initiatives address peacemaking in multiethnic societies. In addition to myriad grant and fellowship projects on specific conflicts, many in-house activities in recent years have focused on ethnic conflict amelioration, with special emphasis on the former Yugoslavia, Africa, the former Soviet Union, and South Asia. For example, one of the institute's earliest grants in the late 1980s supported the volume edited by Joe Montville, *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies*, upon which the Sisk book builds. The institute has also focused on the tools of conflict prevention, work which yielded the recently published Institute Press book, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, by Michael Lund. A wide array of past and present institute programs on religion and conflict, the rule of law and transitional justice, negotiation and mediation, elections and conflict resolution, and managing today's "complex emergencies" through peacekeeping and diplomacy also relate to the power-sharing theme.

The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict is deeply concerned with the democratic processes that Sisk describes. In identifying preventive measures the Commission distinguishes between long-term structural tasks and immediate operational tasks to defuse a

crisis. Structural prevention includes strategies to build intercommunal confidence, overcome deeply held mistrust, and restructure institutions that discriminate against certain ethnic groups. Democratization, which performs all these tasks, is a crucial element of structural prevention. Thus, the Commission sponsors research -- such as this work -- and international forums to highlight the role that democratic institutions and power-sharing arrangements must play in the post Cold War world. A study by Larry Diamond, a leading scholar of democratization, led to a recent Commission report, *Promoting Democracy in the 1990s: Actors and Instruments, Issues and Imperatives*. A forum in Moscow addressed power sharing among institutions, minority groups, and the states of the former Soviet Union. The established democracies, with so much relevant experience, can play essential catalyzing and sustaining roles to help countries negotiate the complicated and slow process of democratization. The Commission is attempting to distill lessons from the recent record of the international community in conflict prevention.

There will be ethnic conflicts in the future, conflicts that could easily become very violent. The critical question is whether such conflicts can be managed without resort to violence, and, ideally, through the structures of participatory democracy. An alert, active international community -- with the close collaboration of scholars and policymakers -- can help parties forestall a turn to violence by encouraging the adoption of an appropriately structured power-sharing agreement based on democratic principles.

We hope that this book, a road map to scholarship and analysis of the international role in promoting ethnic amity, will serve the policy and academic communities well as they grapple with today's -- and tomorrow's -- conflicts.

David A. Hamburg, Cochair
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Executive Summary

Despite the proliferation of new nations after the Cold War, most ethnic groups fighting for self-determination in a sovereign state will not realize their dream. For a variety of reasons, the dissolution of multiethnic states into ethnically homogeneous countries is fraught with problems. The bloody civil wars throughout history testify to the difficulties inherent in the struggle to partition states.

Ideally, claims for self-determination should be accommodated in a democratic framework within existing states. Such accommodation is considered a fundamental human right. In fact, many ethnic conflicts do not begin as a quest for territorial sovereignty, but unless grievances are addressed early, they often result in a movement to secede. Power sharing -- practices and institutions that result in broad-based governing coalitions inclusive of all major ethnic groups -- can preserve multiethnic states by allowing groups some measure of self-determination.

Although power sharing normally evolves out of internal processes, the international community has often promoted power sharing in response to ethnic conflicts, with some successes and some failures. Rarely, however, is the international community informed by the leading contemporary scholarship on power sharing.

This book presents the scholarly and practitioner debate over power sharing in the context of ethnic conflict. It discusses:

- The roots of ethnic conflict
- Approaches to introducing democracy into deeply divided societies
- Types of conflict-regulating practices
- The contribution of power sharing to peace processes
- The role of the international community in power sharing

In conclusion, it draws some lessons for policymakers about the conditions that contribute to the success of power sharing. This summary highlights some key points.

ETHNIC CONFLICT: APPROACHES, PATTERNS, AND DYNAMICS

- Ethnic conflict is either primordial and innate or instrumental and (at least partially) socially constructed. The extent to which analysts perceive ethnicity as immutable and innate versus socially constructed or manipulated by political leaders influences beliefs about the types of institutions and practices that can best ameliorate ethnic conflict. A critical factor is whether ethnic groups are threatened by each other simply because they are different or whether there are perceived pragmatic reasons for the conflict. Perceptions of pragmatic differences are amenable to peaceful management.
- The severity of ethnic conflicts depends in large part on the nature of the relationships, for example, whether identity or socioeconomic differences overlap. An important predictor of the severity of the conflict is the role of the state: Does it stand above conflicts and mediate them, or does a group "own" the state and use its powers to the detriment of other groups.
- A common thread that runs through all violent ethnic conflicts is the manipulative role of ethnic group leaders who foster discrimination and mobilize group members against their foes. Ethnic outbidding refers to extremist ethnic group leaders who decry moderation with enemies as a sellout of group interests.
- Ethnic conflicts can escalate, that is, intensify or spread, or they can de-escalate. The post-Cold War world contains examples of both. Escalation occurs when background conditions of ethnic strife are combined with "conflict triggers" or precipitating events. A useful way to conceptualize moves toward more peaceful ethnic conflict management is through a phases or stages approach to de-escalation, in which conflicts that reach a stalemate are managed through protracted negotiations.

DEMOCRACY AND ITS ALTERNATIVES IN DEEPLY DIVIDED SOCIETIES

- Ethnic conflicts have more often than not been managed with nondemocratic, authoritarian practices such as subjugation and control. However, informal practices of ethnic balancing have at times kept a relative peace even in societies that are not democratic. Democracy is inherently difficult in divided societies, but democratic practices offer greater promise for long-term

peaceful conflict management than nondemocratic ones. Even when democracy is unlikely to be introduced quickly in a society, practices can be put into place that help manage ethnic tensions.

- Simple majoritarian democracy contains special problems for ethnically divided societies. Minority ethnic groups expect to be permanently excluded from power through the ballot box and fear electoral contests conducted under the principle of simple majority rule. Power-sharing practices offer an alternative to simple majoritarian forms of democratic governance.

- There are two broad approaches to constructing democracy in divided societies: the "consociational" or group building-block approach that relies on accommodation by ethnic group leaders at the center and a high degree of group autonomy; and the "integrative" approach, which seeks to create incentive structures for moderation by political leaders on divisive ethnic themes and to enhance minority influence in majority decision making. Consociational approaches rely on elite accommodation and guarantees to groups to protect their interests, such as a mutual or minority veto, whereas the integrative approach relies on incentives for intergroup cooperation, such as electoral systems that encourage the formation of preelection pacts among candidates or political parties across ethnic lines. This paper argues that both approaches can lead to "power sharing" while acknowledging that there is some debate over the question of whether the term applies to integrative practices as well.

A TYPOLOGY OF CONFLICT-REGULATING PRACTICES

- The consociational and integrative approaches can be fruitfully viewed as conceptual poles in a spectrum of specific conflict-regulating institutions and practices that promote power sharing. Which approach and which practices are best is highly contingent upon the patterns and dynamics of a particular conflict. Indeed, a given political system may fruitfully incorporate aspects of both approaches simultaneously. It is useful to consider the practices in terms of three sets of variables that apply to both approaches: territorial division of power, decision rules, and public policies (for example, on language, education, and resource distribution) that define relations between the state and ethnic groups (see Table 1).

Five consociational conflict-regulating practices are

1. Granting territorial autonomy and creating confederal arrangements
2. Creating a polycommunal, or ethnic, federation
3. Adopting group proportional representation in administration appointments, including consensus decision rules in the executive
4. Adopting a highly proportional electoral system in a parliamentary framework
5. Acknowledging group rights or corporate (nonterritorial) federalism

Five integrative conflict-regulating practices are

1. Creating a mixed, or nonethnic, federal structure
2. Establishing an inclusive, centralized unitary state
3. Adopting majoritarian but ethnically neutral, or nonethnic, executive, legislative, and administrative decision-making bodies
4. Adopting a semimajoritarian or semiproportional electoral system that encourages the formation of preelection coalitions (vote pooling) across ethnic divides
5. Devising ethnicity-blind public policies

POWER SHARING AND PEACE PROCESSES

- Power-sharing practices, when they are adopted by parties in conflicts, often evolve as a direct response to a history of violent conflict. Pragmatic attitudes toward other groups can emerge from the belief that the failure to accommodate will precipitate wider strife. Political leaders and publics must be motivated to avoid worsening or more violent conflict if power sharing is to be successfully adopted. Unfortunately, such motivation does not always exist: high levels of violence do not inevitably mean that political leaders will be more moderate and adopt power sharing.
- Transitional moments, changes in international relations and in relations among groups within states, are moments of promise and peril. Ethnic relations can improve or worsen. Power sharing can evolve from transitions or peace processes in which parties adopt agreements or *mutual security pacts* that seek to limit the ability of groups to harm each other. The degree of unity and organizational coherence of the parties, and the ability of political leaders to persuade their constituents to act peacefully, are the most important variables in creating improved relations among ethnic groups. Conciliatory attitudes must be both broad (including "hard-liners") and deep (including key segments of the public as well as leaders).

INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION AND POWER SHARING

- International intervention in ethnic conflicts focuses both on the process by which groups rearrange their relations, through violence or dialogue, and on the terms and structures of the outcomes that are reached. Despite the inherent problems of partition, the international community should not assume that the borders of an existing state are sacrosanct. The principal decision that the international community must face is whether separation or power sharing (living together) is the most achievable, sustainable, and just outcome. This is especially true when the parties themselves cannot reach an agreement on this fundamental question.
- The international community often places too much emphasis on democratic elections without considering their potential perverse impact in situations of severe ethnic conflict, especially if such elections are held with simple majority-rule electoral systems and without prior mutual security pacts. Elections are critical moments in peace processes; they are turning points in which relations can polarize or in which new national unity can be forged through the creation of a legitimate government. Much depends on both the electoral system chosen and the actual administration and monitoring of the election event. Elections provide important opportunities for intervention to help ameliorate ethnic conflicts because they are especially amenable to monitoring and an ongoing international presence.
- Both historically and more recently the international community has promoted power sharing by offering formulas -- institutional blueprints for postconflict political structures -- and has often sought to induce disputants to accept them through a combination of diplomatic carrots and sticks. Increasingly, the international community is using linkages to other issues, such as membership in collective security, trade, and other international organizations, to induce states to adopt practices that promote ethnic accommodation. Promoting conflict-regulating practices in this manner can be a useful tool of preventive diplomacy to arrest the escalation of ethnic conflicts into violence.
- The paradox of promoting power sharing *early* in the escalation of an ethnic conflict is that parties may be unwilling to embrace power-sharing practices because they are not sufficiently desperate or feel insufficiently compelled. At a *late* stage of conflict, after significant violence,

enmities may be too deep for parties to share power for mutual benefit. Determining when a conflict is "ripe" for a power-sharing solution is a difficult judgment requiring intimate knowledge of a situation, especially the willingness of parties to live together within a common or shared political framework.

- Thus, a second paradox is the problem of judging intentions. Tactical adoption of power sharing can set the stage for new grievances and new strife. Moreover, the international community is often asked to secure successful implementation of agreements or to guarantee them, which in essence ties the international community to the substance of a settlement.

- The promotion of power sharing by the international community in situations of deep ethnic conflict is riddled with normative considerations, such as potentially rewarding aggression or appeasement of extremists. It also entails considerable risks, such as inducing parties to share power when their underlying perceptions are still deeply suspicious and based on mutual harm.

- When an international mediator goes beyond facilitating a negotiation process and backs a power-sharing solution at either an early or late stage of escalation, this policy involves choosing sides. This is true of choosing among parties to a conflict (often in favor of minorities who seek to limit the power of majorities) as well as bolstering more moderate factions within a given party or government against more hard-line elements.

POLICYMAKING AND POWER SHARING

- Power sharing involves a wide range of practices and not a simple model or formula that can be universally applied. Thus, in a given conflict there is no substitute for intimate scholarly and policymaker knowledge to reach conclusions about whether any given power-sharing practice will likely have an ameliorative or potentially adverse effect on ethnic conflict. For example, in some situations consociational power sharing may be an appropriate interim measure but should not become a permanent feature of political life. Likewise, parties in an ethnic conflict may be too insecure to accept the incentive mechanisms of the integrative approach, preferring the more firm guarantees of consociationalism.

- In many countries democracy may be a long way off, but the international community can exert pressure on nondemocratic states to adopt conflict-regulating practices such as fair treatment of ethnic minorities and integrative security forces.

- Conditional generalizations can be made that can serve to inform policy. Power-sharing arrangements are successful in managing ethnic conflict when
  - They are embraced by a core group of moderate political leaders who are genuinely representative of the groups that they purport to lead
  - The practices are flexible and allow for equitable distribution of resources
  - They are indigenously arrived at, not agreed upon as the result of excessive external pressures or short-term, zero-sum expectations of the parties
  - Parties can generally eschew the extraordinary measures that some power-sharing practices entail and allow a more integrative and liberal form of democracy to evolve

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TABLE 1: CONFLICT-REGULATING PRACTICES

	CONSOCIATIONAL APPROACH	INTEGRATIVE APPROACH
Territorial	Granting autonomy and creating confederal	

Divisions of Power	arrangements Creating a polycommunal federation	Creating a mixed, or nonethnic, federal structure Establishing an inclusive, centralized, unitary state
Decision-Making Rules	Adopting proportional representation and consensus rules in executive, legislative, and administrative decision making Adopting a highly proportional electoral system	Adopting majoritarian but ethnically neutral executive, legislative, and administrative decision making Adopting a semimajoritarian or semiproportional electoral system
State-Ethnic Relations	Acknowledging group rights or corporate federalism	Adopting ethnicity-blind public policies

[Back to Text](#)

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