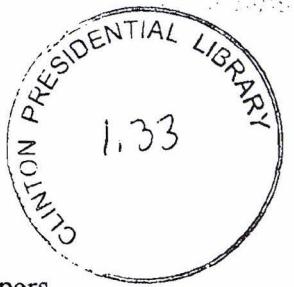


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Elements of a Regional Solution to the Crisis in Burundi

As tasked at the August 9 interagency meeting on Burundi, State has drafted several papers outlining a potential diplomatic process for building a Bosnia-style Contact Group to prepare for a regional peace conference on Burundi (and possibly Rwanda). State has also begun considering the elements of a political framework that would serve as the basis for discussions with our allies. Once refined with allies' input and that of countries/players in the region, this framework could form the basis for negotiations at a regional conference.

This paper summarizes key elements of the State-prepared papers and outlines in general terms the substance of a potential USG proposal to reach a long-term solution to the problems in Burundi. Finally and most importantly, it poses a central policy question: *is the USG prepared to invest the resources and diplomatic capital necessary to make a serious attempt at finding a long-term solution to the problem in Burundi on the basis of the proposal below?*

I. Outlines of Proposed USG Initiative for Burundi

Proposed Political Framework: The current crisis in Burundi, like those in its past, is rooted in a fundamental struggle between rival ethnic groups for power and scarce resources. Hence, any long-term solution to this problem must take into account both the need for a *political* solution to the power struggle, while seeking to contain the struggle for resources by demonstrating that there are economic benefits to peace and a high price for continued warfare.

Burundi is a long way from Jeffersonian democracy, which should not be the immediate goal of U.S. policy. Our immediate goal must be to end the killings and achieve relative stability in Burundi and the region. Once these conditions are achieved, restoration of genuine democracy in Burundi is a reasonable objective.

Any near-term and lasting political solution in Burundi must entail genuine power-sharing among the ethnic groups. The details of a power-sharing agreement must ultimately be worked out among the Burundians themselves, but the international community can and should assist by suggesting a starting point for their discussions. Towards this end, the USG should work to refine a proposal for power-sharing based on the following elements: *decentralized governmental authority/greater regional autonomy* (localities are increasingly ethnically homogenous, so local authorities would likely be run by representatives of one or the other ethnic group) and; *loose federal structure bound together by a multi-ethnic civilian central government* that has genuine control of the military and provides key services to all parts of the country.

The above elements of a proposed political framework are overly general and need amplification. While our final proposal should not be too specific, it should be sufficiently developed to serve as the basis for renewed discussions with our allies and fresh negotiations among the parties to the conflict. A more detailed political framework should cull from relevant elements of the Burundi Convention of Government agreed last year, the Arusha Accords, and the perspectives of USG experts on Burundi. State will develop a more detailed political framework as soon as possible.

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Essential Societal Reforms: To be viable, any political framework must be buttressed by essential reforms including integration of the military, eradication of widespread human rights abuses in the military, police training and judicial reform. In addition, Burundi must embark on a concerted long-term program to ensure equal opportunity for members of each ethnic group in education, government, the military, judiciary and other key segments of civil society.

International Assistance Required: Burundi has proved itself incapable of implementing such sweeping social reforms alone. It will need the active support of the international community in the form of substantial development assistance and help in keeping the peace and building key institutions. One method of providing this support is to establish a broad UN presence -- a la the temporary UN interim administration in Cambodia (or West Irian in the early 1960s). The UN would assist in implementing the agreed political settlement, help run key ministries as they embark on reform programs, deploy peacekeepers to deter acts of violence, and help with police training and military integration.

Such a proposal may be the best solution but would require substantial resources. (The UN mission in Cambodia -- a significantly larger country than Burundi -- required 20,000 peacekeepers and cost approximately \$1 billion.) Today, the UN faces a serious funding crisis, in large part due to U.S. arrearages. Without a new injection of funds, the UN does not have the ability to embark on such a mission in Burundi. U.S. financial support to the UN could not be forthcoming without large appropriations from Congress, which almost certainly will not be available. In addition, given the UN's recent track record in peacekeeping, it is highly questionable whether another ambitious UN mission could succeed. While a UN mission is by no means the only method of providing sustained international support, other methods are likely also to be costly. The U.S. should consult with our allies on alternative means of providing international support following any negotiated settlement in Burundi.

Carrots and Sticks: The parties to the conflict in Burundi have exhibited little, if any, interest in reaching a negotiated political solution to their problems. Both sides are poised for war and have rejected OAU-proposed peace talks. Any serious international effort to negotiate a lasting solution to Burundi's problems must be coupled with tempting carrots and heavy sticks.

The international community, led by key donors and countries in the region, would seek the parties' agreement to a political settlement. If successful, the international community will commit to provide substantial economic assistance and political and security assistance to a reconstituted Burundian federal government.

If the parties refuse to work toward or reach agreement, the international community would cut all development assistance to Burundi, seek to try the extremists for crimes against humanity and impose an economic as well as arms embargo. These tough steps would be aimed at weakening the extremists, taking away the resources for which they compete, and stimulating the population to recommit themselves and their leaders to the establishment of a viable national entity.

PROS

- Threat of harsh, concerted international action along with risks of continued ethnic conflict, may be sufficient to bring parties to a viable, lasting settlement.
- May be achievable in the relative short term.
- If implemented swiftly, could forestall/prevent widespread genocide.
- Allows international community to try one last step short of the use of force to resolve the current crisis.

CONS

- International community must reach agreement on outlines of settlement and tough measures to be imposed if settlement fails. Thus far, donors have been able to agree on little with respect to Burundi.
- Chances of success are limited.
- Costly. Would require substantial political/diplomatic, economic and military investment in Burundi. International involvement should be expected to last at least five years.
- Burundi leaders may divide and conquer international community by neither rejecting agreement outright nor negotiating in good faith.

II. Building a Contact Group and Preparing a Regional Conference

To negotiate a comprehensive political settlement in Burundi, the United States needs the active support and assistance of key donors (who must be equal partners in this endeavor) and the constructive support of countries in the region. These factors are key to any successful approach to the conflicting parties in Burundi.

STEP 1: Contact Group. An important first step would be the establishment of an international Bosnia-style 'contact group' consisting at least of the United States, France, Belgium, UK, Germany, Canada and the Netherlands. An essential prerequisite to any diplomatic initiative is gaining the agreement of the French and Belgians. The U.S. must start with these two countries in building an international negotiating team. Ambassador Bogosian should initiate this effort by conducting intense consultations with the French and Belgians in early September on the modalities of a lasting political solution in Burundi and seek their agreement to participate actively in an international contact group. Bogosian's efforts must be back-stopped by active interventions, when necessary, by top officials at State and the White House. Once constructive French and Belgian participation is assured, the contact group should be broadened to include the other countries listed above.

In approaching key donors, the U.S. should seek support for a political solution along the broad lines described above. However, we should be flexible and welcome any helpful modifications to the U.S. proposal.

STEP 2: Regional Conference. Following agreement among members of the contact group, we would seek support for a regional conference from countries in the region, the UN and the OAU. If obtained, we would support a joint UN/OAU effort to convene a regional conference. (For details of conference process/modalities, see attached State memo.) Ambassador Bogosian

would lead consultations with countries in the region and the UN and OAU. However, most of the day-to-day spade work would be done by our missions in the field. Bogosian plans a trip to the region in mid-September, which provides an important opportunity to solicit support for a contact group plan and lay the foundation for a regional conference. The contact group would provide financial and diplomatic support to the conference by working in conjunction with the UN and OAU to put forward a proposed political framework, offer good offices and serve as honest brokers. Key countries in the region would join us as full partners in these efforts and participate with us in an observer capacity at the conference.

If successful, the regional conference would result in tangible progress towards a long-term political solution in Burundi. If other countries insist that Rwanda also be on the agenda, the U.S. should not object but focus its own energies on solving the more difficult conceptual problem -- Burundi. The regional conference should be viewed not as an end in itself but the substantive launching of what must -- by necessity -- be an extended negotiation process.

III. Is It Worth The Investment?

As noted above, pursuit of the above diplomatic strategy to achieve a long-term political solution to the crisis in Burundi will require a substantial investment of scarce U.S. financial resources (possibly tens of millions of dollars), political capital, and the time and attention of the most senior members of the Administration's foreign policy team. Before we embark on this effort, we must obtain the commitment of senior leaders in the relevant agencies to devote the substantial priority, time and resources that this effort requires. Moreover, there is a substantial risk of failure and hence, embarrassment. In the worst case, by proving the futility of the best efforts of the international community, failure could also conceivably hasten intensified conflict and a humanitarian crisis.

On the other hand, failure to act now to try to achieve a political solution leaves a festering regional crisis unattended. No other countries are offering the leadership required to find a lasting solution. In the absence of a lasting solution, the odds of a massive and even more costly humanitarian crisis are greatest. The Administration could be open to charges yet again of not taking adequate steps to prevent a potential genocide -- this time one for which we have had ample warning. Finally, the fact of recurrent genocide in Central Africa, on top of that in the former Yugoslavia, would seriously erode the already frayed normative fabric that binds the international community and could undermine, possibly irreparably, the international instruments of collective security.

Before the U.S. embarks on the strategy outlined above, the principals must agree to invest their own time, resources and political capital, which are necessary, but far from sufficient for success.