

**A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF SANCTIONS AS THIRD PARTY
LEVERAGE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF INTERNAL CONFLICT:
THE BURUNDI PEACE PROCESS, 1993-2000.**

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**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
ARTS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, INSTITUTE OF DIPLOMACY AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.**

2001.

Abstract

The end of the Cold War heralded hopes for the termination of many Third World conflicts many of which were proxy superpower wars with little if anything to do with 'real' parties to the conflict' interests. However, this much hoped-for post Cold War peace dividend proved disastrously misplaced. The Third World in general and Africa in particular have witnessed some of the most violent conflicts in their post-independence historical evolution. Many of the post-Cold War conflicts in these regions have and continue to be within rather than between states.

Increasing political instability and the concomitant widespread insecurity and economic decline in Africa led to external involvement to restore stability and respect for human rights. However, the diminishing of the strategic value of many of the continents' countries has increasingly rendered major powers' involvement in these conflicts of less foreign policy relevance. The political and military costs that active engagement demand have proved unsustainable in the long run to many major powers to whose domestic constituency they can not justify the change from peacekeeping to peace-enforcement that many of the post Cold War conflicts demand to be effective. This has given increased salience to the role and place of regional arrangements in maintaining stability and security within regions.

It is in this evolving circumstances that regional states imposed sanctions on Burundi in July 1996 to forestall the real possibility of the country's conflict from degenerating into genocide and widespread regional instability. The sanctions were meant to compel the military junta in Burundi to return the country to constitutional rule and to create the conditions necessary for the initiation of unconditional talks between the government and all political as well as armed groups both within and outside the country. Additionally regional states later demanded concrete signs of *irreversibility* in the ensuing peace process for the review of the sanctions.

This study has examined the regional sanctions on Burundi (1996-1999) in the context of *third party leverage* in internal conflict management. The study concludes that sanctions are a viable policy option in *initiating* the management efforts of structural and deeply rooted conflicts as the Burundi one. However, it posits that 'the sanctions appeal' a convenient threshold between the use of force and symbolic diplomatic castigation is

insufficient in addressing the underlying perceptual and structural bases of the conflict in Burundi or anywhere else for that matter. Durable conflict resolution outcomes demand sustenance of power-induced settlement, as a necessary starting point, with informal non-power-based conflict management techniques and methodologies.