The Diplomatic Leading Role to the UN and the Concerns for Protection and Stabilisation in Peace Operations

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Introduction

In this paper, I develop a "micro" theoretical perspective aimed at dealing with contemporary liberal interventionism in peripheral armed conflicts and with its ambiguous ties with the concerns for both protection of civilians and political stabilisation. This focus hampers any pretension to provide with a general assessment of political and ethical rationales regarding a supposed well-established liberal doctrine, or to attest or falsify the "authenticity" of announced motivations in regard to the "real" actions undertaken on the field. I aim at stressing some of the theoretical and empirical outputs of an approach that pays wittingly poor heed to supposedly coherent and pre-existent motivations as a drive for action in the complex organisations that compose the international armed conflict managers (governments, state departments and agencies, multilateral arenas and international bureaucracies). I will neither pretend to hail interventions dedicated to export liberal recipes (Paris, 2004, among many others), nor condemn their supposed liberal agenda and its damaging effects on the targeted peoples (Duffield, 2007) or even for the interveners' political willingness and operational efficiency (Chandler, 2006). My ambition is to better grasp political relations that arise or change around international peace operations, as long as they concern power relations, changing or static hierarchies.

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One objective has gained a massive attention in the International Relations (IR) academic field, not mentioning western-based media: the protection of civilians. The reason may lie in that such objective echoes the primordial controversy of the IR discipline, opposing between liberal and realist reasoning (Finnemore, 1996; Stedman, 2002; Crocker, Hampson and Aall, 2004). Consequences of this debate among theorists are twofold. First, the main focus is on conflicting intentions or motivations *for intervening*, framed in straightforward and general terms: for instance, either protecting civilians – in the "solidarist" approach (Wheeler, 2000; Wheeler and Bellamy, 2005) – or protecting power interests according to realists. Yet we are speaking of complex organisations involving different agents and organisations. What if the strict intentions of protection or stabilisation were but peripheral, or mingled with many other concerns in the minds of most of the state agents engaged in these actions, however "motivated" (whether as protectors or stabilisers) might have been the "initial" decision makers? Second, this focus tends to wipe aside the lead-up of the crisis. The critical moment is understood as a rupture of routine politics, in terms of exception, compared with the banality of the political logics preceding it.

Yet, any "crisis" is embedded in a flux of social practices in different spaces of interaction, which existed before the crisis and will remain after. Important dynamics dwell in these courses of interactions and their own tempos (Dobry, 2009). They bring to question differently the stakes of protecting civilians, far from a single intention labelling decisions to intervene in contexts of large media coverage and "do something" pressure (Ambrosetti, 2010).

I argue in a first section that international actors necessarily emerge as co-producers of internal political orders or governances, well before "critical moments" posing the security threats we are dealing with here. Such accent on political genesis brings to shed light on the *unintended consequences* of previous routine political relations between international and local actors, in terms of forthcoming destabilisations or violence, rather than on decisions taken to respond to existing crises.

I then advocate (section 2) for an apparent sideline research strategy as to better understand these co-producers of local political orders: it focuses on particular arenas and interacting groups, instead of trying to encompass the overall practices and relations surrounding any single peace operation. I discuss one role UN diplomats collectively acknowledge to some specific diplomatic delegations when dealing with specific dossiers at the UNSC table: the leading role. This leading role, as I could observe it, proved itself a rather technical/bureaucratic role, and a poorly institutionalised one, almost "fluid", or transient. It may even raise some doubt concerning its political significance. But I will precisely claim that focusing on such specific roles impedes to deduce too hastily political effects from overall power positions on a regional or global scale.

The last three sections accord a nodal place to this micro object, the diplomatic leading role assumed to the UNSC, in order to question the connections (and the absence thereof) between aloof diplomatic processes that take place among diplomats in New York and the stark rhythm of events driven locally by political-military entrepreneurs. These connections embrace three dimensions: pre-existing protecting bilateral relations and the way these relations evolve when "brought" into the UNSC diplomatic arena (section 3); the exchange of deterring or incentive messages embedded in routine UNSC decisions towards peace operations underway (section 4); and the way routine practices within the UNSC may change or not when facing *critical* situations (section 5).

Three studies cases exemplify my arguments: the diplomatic interactions to the UNSC and their effects on local actors concerning the armed conflicts in Rwanda (1990-1994), Sierra Leone (1991-2002) and Zaire (1996-1997).

Destabilization, Violence against Civilians, and the International Imprint on Local Real Governance

Political violence is entrenched in power relations encompassing its authors, their leaders, and the targeted groups, wherever it takes place, locally. Whether about state elites − even

democratic ones (Mann, 2005) – or rebel movements (Weinstein, 2007), these power relations deserve the most careful attention.

The debate between the aims of protecting civilians versus the political stabilisation in international interventions may be enunciated through the following two questions, and the way they are articulated: Who governs? And how do they govern? International actors caring for stabilisation will pay heed above all to the identity of the political rulers, and to their continuing presence in government. But they cannot miss the fact that the way the ruling groups behaves today towards other groups in their society will affect their chances for political survival tomorrow, possibly mitigating some perceived threats, but neglecting other threat or engendering new ones. This "how" question mingles with the "who" question, as it may favour some political ambitions in particular groups against others and may transform the configuration among political actors (among allies, rivals, bystanders, etc.). And a changing configuration may in turn induce changing practices and tactics among the challengers in their enterprise for conquering power.

Analysts have been prone to record many instances of stabilising strategies from external actors (in Africa an elsewhere in the "global south"), which were aimed at maintaining the ruling faction in power. In this regard, they often use the "patron and client" couple, from its Antic Roman sense, to designate this post-colonial relation aimed at exchanging military and political protection (from the patron) with diplomatic, commercial, and other geopolitical advantages (from the client) (for a theorisation of patron-client relations in domestic affairs, see Einsenstadt and Roniger, 1984; Médard, 1976). France and Francophone Africa after the independence offers a well-documented case in this realm (Brysk, Parsons, and Sandholtz, 2002; Clapham, 1996, chapter 4), as I will detail below. But Christopher Clapham recalls how African leaders devoid of protecting relations with previous colonial powers also resort to liaise with superpowers in order to assure their survival.

Rather undoubtedly, the "who question" prevailed in this geopolitical, stabilisation-oriented stance by external actors. No need to find here general acquaintances between "essentialised" identities: the "who" is *political*; it refers to individuals and groups that proved themselves an asset to external partners as they preserve political exchange relations with them. In this

regard, maintaining these rulers in their position became an interest in itself, particularly in critical moments opening spaces of uncontrolled political change (instauration of multiparty systems and elections, but also popular revolts, social movements, armed insurrections, palace wars, attempts of coups, etc.).

This is the point where arises the concern for the protection of civilians, that is, their extraction from the effects of war and other forms of political violence. One can argue that if recent slogans calling for protection of civilians in armed conflicts are to have some practical effect, it is precisely to make external actors reconsider the question of "how", at the expense of this omnipresent "who". What is at stake is to find efficient incentives and deterrence vis-à-vis political practices (aimed at remaining in power or at conquering it) that cause large scale violence against civilians, whoever their authors might be.

In this regard, one could hardy miss the trend that undermined the principle of sovereignty during the 1990s in multilateral arenas, and reduced accordingly this previously automatic diplomatic rent for any state leader. Doctrinal efforts championing "human security" then the "responsibility to protect" (R2P) stem directly from these lessons, particularly when external supports found out to be indirectly involved in mass violence enterprises. Remind of how many people composing the "international community" in 1994 remained haunted by the genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda (Barnett, 1997, 2002; Bellamy, 2006; Dallaire and Beardsley, 2003; ICISS, 2001; Lanotte, 2007; OAU, 2000; Power, 2002; United Nations, 1999; Uvin, 1998). But such trend triggered out sharp criticisms towards these notions of human security and R2P, blaming them for consecrating the end of formal equality between states. States that prove themselves unable to protect their citizens from large scale violence (repression, insurrections, etc.) expose themselves to a disqualification of their sovereignty, and to international interventions of very intrusive forms, aimed at monitoring governance practices (Pupavac, 2005; Duffield, 2006, chapter 5), including in finance and public accounting matters (Wilén, forthcoming in 2011).

International actions shall be explored in terms of "imprint", that is, of diffuse effects in the course of middle-term relations that may affect, often pervasively, and sometimes in a totally unintended manner, the balances among political actors and their practices in the competitive

games they are engaged in. The main reason is that international conflict management and peace operations necessarily bring new resources and opportunities for political-military entrepreneurs locally (Clapham, 1996, chapter 9: 222-42 particularly). There are unfortunately many instances where this competition for new international resources did not induced self constraint in military matters and violence against civilians, aimed at pleasing international actors; on the contrary, it bided up the political outcomes for the use of highly visible violence (Tull and Mehler, 2005; Hoffman, 2004).

What precedes invites to scrutinize specific interactions and practices from international actors, as potential sources of learning and adjustments by local political-military actors, though sometimes in totally unexpected directions.

Peace Operations and the Leading Role to the UN Security Council: "Micro" Objects for "Macro" Debates

With its peace operations, the UN holds an important position among international actors in conflict resolution, particularly since the beginning of the 2000s and the unprecedented level of activity we have reached today in this realm[1], and particularly on the African continent (with an average of 70 % of the activity of the UN Security Council addressing African issues). One can thus assume that UN operations may harbour actors, practices and social interactions, but also absence of practices or relations, which altogether may have an impact on local hierarchies of power and practices of government, thus on possible violence and/or risks of political destabilization.

A frequent, deemed comprehensive, insight analyses the consecutive UNSC decisions and their (often curtailed and challenging) implementation on the field concerning specific UN operations (Howard, 2008). Rather, my analysis firstly lies on a focus on the UNSC itself as a localised arena of repeated interaction between fifteen diplomatic delegations (and UN secretariat's officers and other guests invited to speak at the table of the UNSC). In these

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[1] With more than 120.000 personnel working for the UN missions on the field (almost 100.000 in uniform), and close to 8 billion US dollars.

interactions, I attempted to distinguish specific roles socially acknowledged and sanctioned among UN diplomats. One informal, bureaucratic role retains my attention, although often bereft of any kind of political urgency: the "lead" particular delegations hold on particular dossiers in the course of the day-to-day work of the UNSC.

Leading Specific Dossiers in the Security Council

As in any other arena of interaction, UN diplomats lean on social rules (Kratochwil, 1989; Onuf, 1989; Katzenstein, 1996). Yet, as foundational constructivist sociologists help recall, such rules can be either formalised or more informal, that is, shaped in the course of the interaction without visible institutionalisation, and even sometimes without verbal rationalisation (Berger and Luckmann, 1971; Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1984; Schatzki, Knorr Cetina and von Savigny, 2001). Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan has for long worked at conceptualising this dimension, based on his substantial anthropological work, with the notion of *practical norm* (Olivier de Sardan, 2008).

Interactionist / constructivist sociologists and anthropologists also highly esteem long-term direct observation of such relations, as it allows scrutinising social regularities and segregating routine practices from more "problematic" ones in the eye of their authors (and not of the observer and her normative background).

A similar anthropological, rather inductive, standpoint drove my interpreting the interactions among UNSC members. In summer 2002, I was granted the opportunity to achieve a two-month internship period in the UNSC alongside the French delegation. I was in charge of the African issues then discussed at the UNSC table (Sierra Leone, DRC, Bissau-Guinea, and Somalia). As this participant observation period was rather short, I prioritised the isolation of some specific social roles assigned among UN diplomats. Such roles would then support further theoretical and empirical research.

One particular role retained my attention: the "leading" role among UNSC delegations on specific dossiers. Through this leading position, one or several delegations serving on the UNSC are informally granted a driving position in the negotiation and decision making process concerning a particular dossier, and at a particular moment (leaders can change).

Important enough in a methodological point of view, the term should not be traced to the academic field, to any already existing, solidified concept. I did not apply here a well established, and theoretically-based, categorisation. I excavated the term from the "indigeneous" diplomatic lexicon to the UN, as I heard it when discussing with my former colleagues dealing with the Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo dossiers ("on DRC, we [the French delegation] have the lead"[2], "the UK has the lead on Sierra Leone", etc.). Then its social consistence was confirmed to me in the daily social division of multilateral labour, in the particular roles and tasks assumed by these delegations before any consultation with Sierra Leone or DRC on the agenda. The moment when the delegations spoke during the private consultations and the public meetings, and the kind of arguments and concerns they rose, also seemed anything but accidental. My feeling was that a pervasive form of influence was at stake in the course of the interaction and in the achievement of preliminary tasks that were collectively expected.

Authors who have a close eye on conflict resolution and international peace operations often mention this leading position in diplomatic and military affairs within multilateral arenas like the UN. In some cases, single dossiers of conflicts are at stake (for instance, Adelman and Suhrke, 1999: 37; Barnett, 1997: 572; Cooper and Taylor, 2001; Jones, 2001; Tavolato, forthcoming). But others mention diplomatic leading positions referring to specific thematic issues, cutting across different conflicts and regions, like Canada's leading position on Human Security in the UN during the end of the 1990s (Cathelin, 2008), or the UK about the Kimberley process on diamonds trade in conflict zones. Still others stress, in a problem-solving prospect, how the existence of an active diplomatic leading role within a multilateral arena bodes well for the efficiency of the actions to be adopted (Howard, 2008: 11-13 notably; Whitfield, 2007: 6).

Authors working on multilateral negotiations (commercial ones, for instance) evidently show a great familiarity with this position and the entrepreneurial conception of policy making it carries on (Hampson and Hart, 1995: 42), notably on the formation of coalitions (Higgot and Cooper, 1990) or on the importance of individual leaders in foreign policy (Hermann, 2001).

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[2] Into the French delegation, we even say "nous avons le *lead*" (using the English word).

This obviously differs from an IR perspective on *global* leadership, mainly about the American power (Nye, 1990), or about the hegemonic order and the global political economy (Gilpin, 1983): the lead concerns here a diplomatic delegation (and not a state, with the whole would-be levers of influence at its disposal, with the many arenas of interaction its agents occupy), that is, a delimited number of persons in a delimited arena of regular interaction, about delimited issues.

The leading position deserved to be explored in its manifestations, as a sociological object, and regarding the *practical norms* in which it was embedded, as to turn this term into a more solidified concept, empirically and analytically (Ambrosetti, 2009: chapter 5; Ambrosetti and Cathelin, 2008).

The Lead and its Underlying Practical Norms and Social Sanctions

In constructivist and interactionist sociology, roles are parts of social agents' identities. Routine practices are those by which a role is reproduced, since their authors signified through them they are still completely recognising somebody's role (Giddens, 1984: 83-6). I term this the social sanction of specific roles, following foundational sociologists (Durkheim), and deem it a relevant tool for micro investigation of specific political relations in delimited groups (Ambrosetti, 2010).

About the leading position to the UNSC, members of the Council will often expect from one of them a deeper involvement in a dossier of conflict, particularly when this delegation has strongly advocated for this dossier being put on the agenda of the Council – this supposes to convince any initially reluctant delegation, since an informal rule among UNSC members requires a consensus for putting any new dossier on the agenda. They will also expect from any UNSC member notoriously liaised with the state in turmoil to volunteer for such involvement (think of a former colonising power still active in the region, a regional political ally, etc.). Practically, it refers to a special monitoring of the considered situation, the drafting of resolutions or presidential statements (at the very least), the constant negotiation with UNSC delegations out of the table of the Council (particularly the main financial contributors in the UN peace operations budget), with the Secretariat services (when discussing

operational options, available means, but also the appointment of UN representatives and senior staff on the field), and with troop contributing states.

No official prerogative stems from this informal position. Yet, this member will inspire some confidence to her colleagues when suggesting a line of action, according to the room others accord her, considering their own perceived interests. Into the consultation room, the leading delegation usually speaks immediately after the president. Equally, it first congratulates its partners when a decision is reached.

By no means does this position amount *by itself* to both a secret and politically dominant position among UNSC members, which would inspire harsh competition between them. It is a purely bureaucratic informal role, above all. In many instances, when dealing with the most peripheral conflicts (in 1990s Africa particularly), volunteers were missing, and leading positions were finally held by default, under the friendly pressure of permanent members, for instance. In other cases, permanent members were involved from the very beginning (France for Rwanda from February 1993 to the start of the genocide in April 6, 1994, or for Cote d'Ivoire in the 2000s), although they sometimes work at sharing this political impulse with close partners to the UN (like the U.S. with the U.K. and Norway concerning South Sudan in the 2000s[3]).

Now, if a delegation successfully asked the UNSC to act in a country experiencing a security threat for its population, for its political stability and/or for the stability of the region, one cannot underestimate the interest this delegation has to preserve some influence at the UNSC table, and therefore on the actions the UNSC decides towards the political-military forces locally involved in the turmoil. Here is a matter of concern in the debate that underlies my discussion. The leading delegation shall have proven its minimal acquaintance with the dossiers and the type of challenges involved in the eye of its peers to the UN (that is, it shall not appear as a pure novice or incompetent one), as well as its ability to be heard locally, to enjoy some local levers of action, to be welcomed, and not to alienate local actors against a Council that would be driven by a hostile diplomacy, or a totally incompetent one.

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[3] About this U.S. frequent strategy, see Whitfield (2007: 62).

In turn, this leading delegation will be harnessing new multilateral resources from the UNSC, material (human, military), organisational, legal (mandates), and symbolic ones (international legitimacy), that might help reducing the domestic pressure regarding the financial burden and the political costs of envisaged or already launched national operations. But this mutualisation shall not appear too costly, in terms of doctrines, of general strategic preferences, of expected efficiency regarding the multilateral means available, etc.

In these crossing relations, preserving a diplomatic influence to the UN and preserving the ability to impact the local events and political practices and hierarchies intermingle, as we will see.

Let me now turn back to the question of the co-production of local politics the "stabilisation versus protection of civilians against violence" debate, apropos this diplomatic leading position within the UNSC.

Pre-Existing Protecting Relations with Local Regimes and the Resort to Multilateralism

In this section, I consider the process thereby UNSC members mobilise the Council on particular topics. As mentioned above, there is often only one delegation that plays a decisive role in asking and obtaining that a particular situation be put on the UNSC agenda, as a threat to international peace and security. For their colleagues, these efforts naturally reveal some interest and some pretension to sway the course of the UNSC actions to come towards this country or situation, particularly when close relations between these states already exist, like in privileged "*zones d'influence*" well acknowledged among UNSC members. But this conditions a UNSC involvement in a situation of conflict. The three following studied cases stress different kinds of relations between such pre-existing zones of influence and the mobilisation of the UNSC on a dossier.

Rwanda 1990-1994

The configuration in terms of zones of influence fits well with the conditions thereby the UNSC handled, in March 1993, the armed conflict in Rwanda that sparked on October 1, 1990, between the (Northerner Hutu-led) regime of Juvénal Habyarimana and the (Tutsi-led) rebellion of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. In 1993, the French delegation asked for a UNSC intervention in a country whose regime's ties with the French Presidency were known (Adelman and Suhrke, 1999: 37; Jones, 2001). These ties were all the more obvious when François Mitterrand's advisors for military and African affairs almost immediately assented to president Habyarimana's call for coming to his rescue in October 1990, sending tens of soldiers (operation *Noroît* mobilised up to six hundred) and military advisers (France, 1998; Lanotte, 2007; OAU, 2000; Prunier, 1997).

That the Elysée palace asked its delegation to the UN to advocate for the Rwanda dossier in the UNSC referred to the contextual weakness of the military resource. A UN peacekeeping operation appeared as an acceptable solution, as long as it could stop the rebellion progress and foster a political agreement that would not marginalise the Habyarimana regime in the benefit of its enemies (France, 1998: 299)[4].

Sierra Leone 1991-2002

Yet, these zones of influence acknowledged to some UNSC members do not cause the UNSC to get involved *if* precisely these members do not want so. In April 1991, the Sierra Leonean regime of Joseph Momoh alerts the UNSC following military assaults against its army by rebels (the RUF) visibly composed of elements of the *National Patriotic Front of Liberia*, the rebel movement led by Charles Taylor against Samuel Doe's regime in Liberia[5]. The U.S. and the U.K. delegations are considered the potentially most interested ones, according to their historic and diplomatic ties with these countries. They will only accept to deal with Liberia at

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[4] "[J]*ust as conflict parties are not interested in achieving peace at any price, so, too, powerful mediators have clear preferences about the kind of settlement they will support*. » (Crocker, Hampson and Aall, 2004: 24). This remains true for middle power mediators.

[5] Letter dated from the permanent representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, 10 April 1991, S/22474.

the UNSC table, in 1993, though, and leave the Sierra Leonean dossier for long out of the debates (Châtaigner, 2005).

One element counted in their ability to remain uninvolved. In the crisis Liberia was facing since December 1989 (particularly with Doe's death and the failure of the state), a military force was deployed by another friendly regime, Nigeria, which consented to provide Samuel Doe with some security patronage. This (constrained) patronage benefited from a post-Cold War context where regional organisations were encouraged to build their own military capacities to respond to security threats. In ECOWAS (the Economic Community of the West African states), four states (Gambia, Ghana, Mali and Togo) agreed with Nigeria to consider the Liberian conflict as a challenge, and created the *Standing Mediation Committee* (SMC). It launched a military operation (ECOMOG), whose bulk essentially leant on Nigerian shoulders. Therefore, UNSC discreetly encouraged and convinced the SMC to expand its operation as the Liberian conflict was spilling over in Sierra Leone. The U.S. and the U.K. provided the operation with (limited) material support on a bilateral basis (Aning, 1994; Keen, 2005; Olonisakin, 2008; Richards, 1996).

Like in Rwanda, the West African (informally) appointed military stabiliser found it hard to deal with the enduring military game between the RUF and the authorities, and particularly with political instability and military coups in Freetown (in 1992, then in 1997). UN sent an envoy at the end of 1994 (Châtaigner, 2005: 51-2). But the ECOMOG acted like a "subcontracting" security provider in their eye, until Sierra Leone gained stronger coverage and diplomatic visibility for deepening instability and violence. This was particularly the case when indiscriminate violence originated from the Nigerian troops themselves as they engaged in open combats and bombings in Freetown after the May 1997 coup of mutineers from the Sierra Leone army allied to the RUF (the AFRC). The leading delegations in the UNSC were progressively brought to handle more firmly the dossier.

Zaire 1996-1997

Other types of mobilisations emerge among the UNSC members, in which existing protective relations fade away. In August 1996, the then hastily eroding Zairian regime of Joseph Mobutu (Sese Seko) faced armed upheavals in South Kivu. Political tensions were high in

South and North Kivu between different populations conflicting for land and historically thrust along a pro- or anti-Mobutu divide. The influx of tens of thousands of Hutu Rwandan refugees in the huge camps around Goma and Bukavu at the end of the genocide in Rwanda, in July 1994, exacerbated the situation. These tensions turned into a more organised rebellion in the following weeks (the AFDL), as the new Rwandan regime born of the RPF rebellion in Rwanda chose to overthrow the then sick president Mobutu and to remove the threat of bordering camps in Zaire serving as sanctuaries for Hutu armed groups (including former *génocidaires* and their families, but not only) willing to take the power back in Kigali (HRW / FIDH, 1997; Lemarchand, 2002; Pottier, 2002).

This time, patronage relations did not count. The former patron, the U.S. delegation, showed it dropped the Mobutu regime, and opted for a stance of favourable neglect concerning this AFDL rebellion and its Rwandan ally. The French delegation intended to play a protective role towards Mobutu, without any military means.

The UNSC did seize the Zaire crisis, however, in October 1996. Indeed, an important mobilisation arose among UN delegations based on humanitarian grounds.

UN Operations and Day-to-Day Messages to the Local Armed Groups

Local military-political leaders keep a close eye on international interventions and their outcomes, be they directly concerned by the intervention – and linked in a way or another with the international interveners –, or totally external to it – but eager to vet what is internationally *practically* acceptable and possible to do (whatever the discourses). Diplomatic and military leaders well know the importance of the messages they collectively send to them through their interventionist practices. Yet, in their everyday work, with its routine and its selective urgencies, they do not always spend the same energy at deciphering what precise message they are sending to whom and with which consequences.

A Partial French Lead, UNSC Indifference and Genocidal Politics in Rwanda

The context of profound indifference into the UNSC reinforced French presidency's partial views (Barnett, 1997). Habyarimana inspired confidence to the international aid community (Uvin, 1998). And the French delegation was the influential delegation within the UNSC on Francophone Africa matters, thanks to a sort of benevolent, although sometimes irritated, stance from the U.S. and other Western partners, when the Cold War required encouraging outside stabilisers against a USSR expanded influence (Clapham, 1996). But this influential position also resulted from the supports and levers France could gather from African actors locally and regionally for the decisions and actions the UNSC would adopt.

Concerning Rwanda in 1993, the French delegation proved itself cautious to gain the support of the local states: Rwanda *and Uganda* were officially asking for the peace operation. The main immediate reluctance the French delegation faced was the concern the U.S. (and other permanent members, notably Russia) expressed for an uncontrolled pull of the UN peace operations budget. But it overcame, using the traditional tit-for-tat argument after France's military support for U.S.-led Restore Hope and UNOSOM II operations in Somalia since December 1992. For the rest, the French demand did not provoke surprise or negative reactions collectively.

It is well known that the UNSC as a whole tended to interpret the worrying escalation of political violence in exclusive terms of power-sharing arrangements among belligerents. French-led efforts to place pressure on the Rwandan "*parti unique*" (the MRND) for a multiparty system (1992) and for peace negotiations with the RPF in Arusha deemed to be normal practices, reproducing UNSC members' reliance and indifference, even when these practices were insidiously radicalising almost all the political parties and fuelling acts of violence and mass murders from Hutu-Power extremists against Tutsi civilians (Des Forges et alii., 1999; Dupaquier et alii, 1995; Kymonio, 2008 ; Mann, 2005; Prunier, 1997).

The UNSC seemed bound to keep defending the Arusha agreement (August 4, 1993) as a viable one, hoping that the current marginalisation of the Habyarimana clan would hasten an internal, peaceful political transition. It thus minimised the increasing violations of the agreement from both parties, and the climate of general political violence against civilians

(Khadiagala, 2002). Rwanda was even elected as a new member of the UNSC in January 1994, as a way to encourage Rwanda to carry on with the transition. This could not happen without an electoral support from the Francophone states among the group of the African states into the General Assembly, but it also required a preliminary support of the UNSC.

The message the UNSC sent was a sort of "the situation can go on this way; it does not really worry us so far". But it indifferently applied to the moderate politicians as well as the extremist forces that were working at spoiling the transition and were ready for mass slaughters. At the end of the day, the UNSC sent poor deterrent message to the belligerent and their own extremist forces.

An Irresolute Security Council in Sierra Leone before May 2000

Contrarily to the French authorities in Rwanda, the U.S. and the U.K. kept a prudent distance between them and the Liberian and the Sierra Leonean dossiers, in the absence of firm patron-client relations between these governments. Immediate national interventions were not needed, thanks to the ECOMOG. But the modest multilateral management of these dossiers supposed increasing relations with local actors. Apparently, although collectively acknowledged as the most influential ones locally, these delegations could not afford – or had no interest – to liaise too deeper with local actors in such post-Cold War (and post-Mogadishu) African context. They prioritized general elections in both countries before any potential deeper UN involvement. In the elections in Liberia in 1996, U.S.-backed Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf finally lost and rallied Charles Taylor. But in Sierra Leone, Western- and Nigeria-backed Ahmed Tejan Kabbah (a former UNDP officer supported by the SLPP party) won, partly thanks to the international pressure on the former junta, notwithstanding the existing defiance between Kabbah and the Sierra Leonean military leadership.

Constant hesitations affected the UNSC action, however. The instability among the politically-active army boded ill for a resolute UN deployment, if the governmental partner facing the RUF rebels was to implode at any moment. And any UN action needed to placate the ECOWAS, Nigerian-led force deployed since 1990 in the (Mano river) region. Subsequently, painful military reactions were left to the ECOMOG after the May 1997 coup and when the RUF enjoyed again new audience with the media coverage of its violence and

launched new offensive towards Freetown in December 1998 - January 1999. According to Paul Richards, the RUF started betting on visible cruelty when militarily defeated and hiding into the forest at the end of December 1993, in order to thwart its fall into political marginalisation by gaining huge visibility in international media. It amplified this strategy to overcome its political marginalisation as international actors were advocating for general elections in 1996 (leading to the infamous campaigns of amputations) (Richards, 1996: 85 notably).

What were the outcomes of RUF violence and offensive stance? They won a seat at the table of negotiations for a peace deal under the UN auspices. The Lomé Agreement (July 7, 1999) intended to turn the RUF into a respected ruling partner in an extended interim government. Yet, one would be mistaken to think the U.S. and the U.K. did not assess this message and its possible negative effects. But the Lomé agreement resulted from two constraints: 1/ the difficulty for the ECOMOG to manage the situation militarily whereas exposed to the scrutiny of a UNSC privately expressing concern to ECOWAS when combats were too visible and costly in civilian lives; and 2/ the absence of offensive means available for the UN secretariat, preventing it from launching a more robust operation in the middle run alongside the chosen partner, President Kabbah. Once the peace deal signed, nevertheless, the U.K. delegation took a more resolute lead on the UN mission (UNAMSIL). It carefully sidelined the ECOWAS-Nigerian leadership and worked at isolating and marginalising the RUF combatants in UNAMISL everyday operational choices (DDR etc.). This resulted in the May 2000 crisis.

A Diplomatic Leader by Default, Eager not to Intervene in Zaire

Being acknowledged an active leader concerning the Zairian crisis in autumn 1996 was probably the last thing the U.S. delegation wanted on the topic. The State Department admitted new levels of instability (and violence) in the Great Lakes region with a UN devoid of robust means to respond rapidly and efficiently. One shall relate this choice for inaction to the domestic political balance unfavourable to any U.S. involvement in UN peace operations in Africa at this time (see below), but also to a strategy aimed at betting on "New African Leaders", that is, on political-military entrepreneurs that proved themselves able to overthrow old autocratic regimes and endowed with enough political and military means and

competence in order to establish political order in their countries and their immediate vicinity, with the deceiving results we know (Rosenblum, 2002).

Yet, in Autumn 1996 Zaire, the American delegation could not ably drop the matter, as it faced a strong diplomatic mobilisation in October. It could thus not diffuse the same climate of self censorship that ruled the UNSC during the three first weeks of the genocide in Rwanda, and preferred to remain tuned with the collective movement. It succeeded however in excluding the (uncertain) military solutions that were proposed for stopping the combats and freezing the military progress of the rebellion (and its Rwandan Patriotic Army support). It helped marginalising the French delegation by championing another potential leading delegation concerning the military operation to come, the Human Security advocate Canada. UNSC members (including France) supported the project of a Canadian-led multilateral military operation aimed at protecting the refugees and civilians in Eastern Zaire. Resolution #1080 authorising the operation was adopted on November 15, 1996. In this public meeting, the UNSC welcomed at its table 19 delegations other than the UNSC members, and the draft for the resolution was eventually sponsored by 33 delegations at end of the session, and adopted unanimously by the UNSC[6] (Ambrosetti, 2009; Cathelin, 2008; Hay, 1999).

Much energy was dedicated to this project. In vain, eventually: the return of numbers of refugees in Rwanda after their camps having been dismantled by the Patriotic Rwandan Army in November in front of international media cameras, and the incessant technical hesitations and demands from the U.S. delegation towards the Canadian planners of the operation, achieved to demobilise the diplomatic supports of the operation (Ibid). Yet, thousands of Hutu Rwandan refugees who refused to go back home were killed by the Rwanda army and the AFDL rebels. And Rwanda could then take control of mineral resources in the region (Adelman and Suhrke, 1999; HRW / FIDH, 1997; Lemarchand, 2002; Pottier, 2002).

When Critical Conjunctures Come: Protecting *at Least* the UN Missions from Severe International Discredit

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[6] United Nations official records S/PV.3713.

When the UNSC faces situations collectively judged "critical", one needs to envisage simultaneously the kind of relations previously knotted between specific delegations and local actors, the forms of the UN involvement in the lead-up of the crisis, and the role assumed by these delegations in the interaction within the UNSC. Consider now the outcomes of the studied crises, in terms of protection and/or stabilisation. It brings to point out at least one *practical* lesson among UNSC members during the 1990s, concerning the limits of UN peace operations in their relations with local actors' violent strategies: one model of diplomatic leading role progressively emerge and seemed practically acquiesced by a majority, and openly supported by some (the U.S.).

Urging a New Protecting Stance when "Using" UN Peace Operations: The U.S. and its Costly Message in Rwanda

In Rwanda, the armed conflict never appeared as a critical moment for UNSC members. The French Presidency and French military assumed a stabilising (regime protecting) role and a mediation role in the short run, thanks to their (overestimated, ex post) influence on local government actors. The protection of civilians remained compelled to the achievement of a power-sharing political agreement. Along with a climate of indifference then self censorship to the UNSC, this prevented from impeding the fatal road to genocide.

The French leader within the UNSC made a decisive mistake concerning Rwanda. On the one hand, because of the previous involvement from the military leadership alongside the Rwandan army loyal to Habyarimana and its subsequent acute touchiness on this topic, French diplomats did not work enough at bending on time the perilous evolution exposed above. But on the other hand, it rested too much on a (ill-anticipated) fall-back solution: a stubborn reaction from the UNSC members in case things eventually went severely wrong. As we know, despite a hundred-day indisputable genocide that devastated the country and claimed some 800.000 to one million lives (mainly Tutsi civilians but also Hutu political opponents and human rights activists) in spring 1994 under the nose of a UN ill-equipped peacekeeping mission deployed in the country, such reaction never came, alas.

Africa lost its strategic value for most of the Western diplomacies at the time. In Francophone Africa, the U.S. was not prone any more to support France claims (Schraeder, 1996). And the

military defeat in Mogadishu on October 3, 1993, two days before the UNSC authorisation for a peacekeeping mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), cut short any willingness within the UNSC and the UN Secretariat for peacekeeping missions in Africa (particularly in the services of Kofi Annan, then Deputy Secretary-General in charge of peace operations). The Secretariat received a clear message from the American authorities: to preserve the (indispensable) support of the U.S. Congress (30% of the whole peace operations budget at that time), the UN had to avoid urgently new images of U.S.-financed UN blue helmets engaged in costly military defeats in conflicts without any strategic interest for the U.S. If the UN could not harness the material, logistical and doctrinal means to succeed on the field, or at least to avoid a highly media-covered, thus humiliating, defeat, it would better not act at all and remain out of the trouble, at least out of sight on the field; and in this case, it would better avoid powerful words like the "g-word" (genocide) (Barnett, 1997; 2002; Dallaire, 2003; Power, 2002; OAU, 2000; United Nations, 1999). This is what the UNSC members did in Rwanda.

With the U.S. then UN withdraw from Somalia and the shameful UN inaction in the heart of the Rwandan genocide, worrying messages were sent by the UN to entrepreneurs of violence. First, if you want to kick the international forces out that impede to carry on violent projects, you should target directly and in the most visible manner these forces, and particularly Western personnel, as Mohammed Farah Aideed's men did in Somalia in June and October 1993, since intervening states in these peripheral conflicts rarely share the kind of high-valued interests that drive their massive and durable military actions in other parts of the world whatever the human costs (Vietnam yesterday, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.). In Rwanda, the day after President Habyarimana's death in a crash on April 6, 1994, the *Garde présidentielle* rallied Théoneste Bagosora's plan for the constitution of a new government faithful to the Hutu-Power extremist ideology, and killed in the cruellest manner the moderate Prime minister but also ten of the Belgian blue helmets who were protecting her. Because the UN Secretariat did not react and opposed any Belgian firm military response to the killers, the latter chose to quit the UNAMIR, depriving the UN force from its offensive backbone (Dallaire, 2003). According to military who were on the field at the time, there were no doubts that a perverse lesson had been learnt in Mogadishu (Tripodi, 2006).

The American delegation advocated for a new position after October 1993, with some success among the UNSC members. If humiliations were to be avoided, the UN needed to more drastically select where it should intervene and when it should withdraw. This was applied to Rwanda: with the death of president Habyarimana (the supposed partner for stability) on April 6, 1994, and the diffusion of mass killings, the UNSC and particularly the delegation that asked to involve the UNSC into this situation would have to assume their impotence and quit (as the U.S. did in Somalia in March 1994), rather than plunging the UN deeper in an inextricable situation. Importantly enough, in the U.S. delegation's eye, such withdraw would also teach signing parties of peace agreements that they could not rely on a UN support and presence were they to prove themselves unwilling to comply to what they agreed (Barnett, 1997). One door remains open, though: UNSC member states, particularly the leading one, were invited to harness *by themselves* the required means for intervening with chances of success, in order to restore minimal conditions for resuming UN peace activities (Ambrosetti, 2010; see also Barnett, 1997).

Losing a Routine Leading Position and Changing Practices: France in 1990s Great Lakes Crises

Some U.S. preferences finally inspired operational recommendations into the 2000 Brahimi report reforming UN peace operations (United Nations, 2000). But they are rarely presented sociologically as a change occurring in the *practical norms* supporting the *precise role of diplomatic leader to the UNSC*. I claim this shall be interpret as a change that affects the practices the UNSC members collectively expected from the leading delegation and the practices they will collectively authorise consequently.

The belated, UN-endorsed French Operation *Turquoise* (22 June–22 August 1994) reflects, after six weeks of inaction (and the decision to withdraw almost all the UNAMIR contingents on April 21), an understanding of this new model of lead. But it inspired many sarcasms and criticisms regarding previous French action and its possible discredit as an impartial and locally respected protector of civilians[7]. The operation project only won a UNSC mandate

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[7] First, during the UNSC public meeting on May 16, 1994, some delegations pronounced very unusually severe statements against the Rwandan regime and against the UNSC choices they previously acquiesced on. United

thanks to a firm U.S. support. However, this did not prevent the UNSC members from doubting about French ability to keep a grip on the local actors, now their client was dead and its rival (Paul Kagamé, the coming Rwandan president) proved himself to be the master of security (and insecurity) issues in the region (African Rights, 1995: 698-711; France, 1998: 288-9; Jones, 1995, 231).

Zaire 1996 unfolded one fact: the genocide in Rwanda (which will be progressively interpreted as a shameful, costly failure for the UN, in terms of image, of credibility) made the French delegation lose its previously routinised leading position concerning Great Lakes and Francophone Africa. Suspicions and even ostracism still reigned, offering easy-to-grasp arguments against the French call for immediate action[8].

But Zaire was also the occasion to weigh the consequences of a reluctant leader, the U.S., when no UN operation is already deployed. For domestic and diplomatic reasons altogether, its delegation to the UN supported a specific choice concerning the stability of the region: the avoidance of any UN military operation, and the confidence on local military strongmen (the Ugandan Yoweri Museveni and the Rwandan Paul Kagamé).

French military came back in the region in spring 2003, in Zaire renamed DRC (by its new master Laurent-Désiré Kabila in 1997), with operation *Artémis* (delimited to the city of Bunia, Ituri), under the auspices of the European Union. A few months before, the French delegation (led by Jean-David Levitte) renewed with a collectively-acknowledged leading role to the UNSC on this very dossier, though very prudently exerted in close cooperation with the Americans and the British. Times were different, in France, but also in the UNSC, whereas the UN peace activities were skyrocketing after September 11th and the diplomatic turmoil concerning Iraq.

Nations official records S/PV.3377. Then, the debates about a UN mandate for *Turquoise* unfolded the criticisms and suspicions. See United Nations official records S/PV.3392.

[8] Interviews with concerned actors and the study of French diplomatic cables support this claim. Some exposed that the French had to complain as their delegation was even not invited in operational meetings preparing the military intervention (see Ambrosetti, 2009).

Yet, among other things (like the agenda to foster the Security and Defence European Policy in faraway interventions), *Artémis* affirmed the necessary ability of the leading UNSC delegation to gather political will and military means in order to act coercively when instability and visible large-scale violence against civilians were made visible in the media and when the UN mission deployed in DRC (then the MONUC) was militarily challenged with enough visibility immediately after having negotiated the withdrawal of the Ugandan military forces present in Bunia.

Undoubtedly, things are complex in the huge territory of the DRC and the regional war that started in August 1998. Attempts to ally security concerns both for the regime and for civilians in close relation with the internationally-supported president, Joseph Kabila, remain fragile today. But *Artémis* nevertheless offers an arresting point of comparison with the British leading role in Sierra Leone.

An Acknowledged Successful Model of a Lead Protecting its Mission: the U.K. in Sierra Leone

In May 2000, around 500 UNAMSIL personnel were abducted by discontent RUF commanders in different parts of the country. Whereas the U.S. immediately advocated for a withdrawal, Tony Blair's government chose to militarily come to the rescue of "his" UN mission under siege and to avoid a new fiasco, as the U.K. delegation progressively got involved as an active leader of this mission from 1999 on (Châtaigner, 2005: 112-3; Ero, 2000: 110-1; Williams, 2004: 116).

The U.K. demonstrated to the other UNSC members that an intrusive and robust intervention from first national forces and then UN peacekeepers under its leading position to the UNSC might provide with efficient stabilisation, at least in such favourable conditions where means were available – from London, from the Guinean army, then from the U.S. diplomacy and the international donors – and the challenges to overcome were relatively low – a small territory, a relatively weak rebel group with increasingly exhausted combatants (Olonisakin, 2008; Richards and Vincent, 2008). The Leonean regime benefited from an important foreign support (notably in U.K.-led reform of the security sector provided by the International Military Assistance Training Team), but simultaneously remained under international scrutiny

in order to ensure this UNSC-supported resolute action will not indirectly favour particularly violent or destabilising political practices or strategies from President Kabbah and his regime. The U.K. leading role in 2000-2002 also reflected in the key persons appointed to the UNAMSIL leadership, like the chief of the mission, the Nigerian ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji and his deputy and UNDP resident coordinator, the British Alan Doss, or in the UNSC public meeting British ambassador Jeremy Greenstock, then chairing the Council, dedicated to the Mano River region's crises in July 18, 2002[9].

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[9] United Nations official records S/PV.4577 Resumption 1.