

From Armed Protector to Peace Manager: Unfolding the Diplomatic Leading Role towards African Belligerent Parties

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This proposal stems from a doctoral thesis which embraced a “sociology of the everyday practice” stand about diplomatic practices among UN Security Council (UNSC) members concerning two African armed conflicts (Rwanda 1990-1994 and Sierra Leone 1991-2002)*.

Many of these practices reveal a tension between the *goals of either protection or stabilisation*. But I claim that the current liberal intervention paradigm should be understood through the lens of *specific social roles* reproduced among foreign diplomacies, international officers and political-military elites locally. Analysing these roles requires tracing what I term *practical norms*.

One particular social role, depicted in my doctoral work, will be discussed: the *leading role* particular diplomatic delegations assume in the UNSC *apropos* particular dossiers of armed conflicts in Sub-Saharan African. Studying this role brings to expose the practices a diplomatic leader deploys on the field towards the belligerent parties, in order – this is my hypothesis – to meet the expectations other actors may have towards such diplomatic role. No doubt, these practices do include protective and a stabilising dimensions. But on whose benefice precisely? And according to which priorities? A comparison between the French diplomacy’s role in Rwanda (1990-1994) and the British one in Sierra Leone (1999-2007) will empirically support the methodological and theoretical demonstration. The paper will conclude that such diplomatic and military leadership acknowledged in the UNSC is merged with at least *three different roles* assumed towards the belligerents on the field: the roles of *armed protection, of third party mediation, and of institutional transformation*. This result, supported by a recent collective comparative study (to be published in 2011) concerning Sierra Leone, DRC and Burundi, will raise practical lessons concerning the combination of these roles between international interveners and local belligerents.

* Ambrosetti D., *Normes et Rivalités diplomatiques à l’ONU. Le Conseil de sécurité en audience*, Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2009.