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International Actors' Roles towards Belligerent Parties and their Outcomes: the Cases of Sierra Leone, DRC and Burundi

David Ambrosetti (CNRS / University Paris Ouest)
dambrosetti@u-paris10.fr

Mélanie Cathelin (EU Institute for Security Studies)
Melanie.Cathelin@iss.europa.eu

with Pierre Anouilh (Institut d'études politiques de Bordeaux / LAM)

Introduction

This paper stems from a study (Ambrosetti, Cathelin and Anouilh, forthcoming) we dedicated to the effects of international interventions in Sub-Sahara Africa for the French ministry of Defence (Delegation for Strategic Affairs)[1], from three fields of international interventions Sierra Leone (1991-2005), DRC (1996-2006) and Burundi (1995-2003). In this paper, we present our approach and some of our results, as well as an enlargement to other situations and potential results.

Undoubtedly, Sub-Sahara Africa has hosted a renewed form of political and military international interventionism since the end of the Cold war, which involved an ever-growing

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numbers of actors and available means. Conflict management capacities have apparently become a new resource for power between states and international organisations on the international scene. Yet, one shall easily consider many of these interventions have not reached their announced goals.

Studies in International Relations may inspire a twofold reservation about their paying so much heed to the interveners' standpoint and their decision making processes (Howard, 2008; Whitfield, 2007). First, they frequently intend to ascribe one intention or motivation to the interveners, in a supposed unidirectional sequence, starting with the crisis, then political decision for international intervention (or an absence thereof), ending the sequence with the observable outcomes locally. What if the announced intentions were but peripheral, or mingled with many other concerns in the minds of the many state agents engaged in these actions, however "motivated" 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, as shown by in-depth, field-driven anthropological analyses on armed conflicts root causes – as well as social science theorists (Dobry, 2009) –, "crises" are embedded in a flux of social practices in different places and social groups, which existed before the critical moments and will remain after. Understanding international actions' effects requires scrutinizing precise local governances, with specific individuals and groups holding power positions (in the state or more locally), and with different practices, different manners to exert these power positions.

In this prospect, international actors emerge as would-be co-producers of internal political orders, well before "critical moments" posing the security threats we are dealing with in our cases. Such accent on political genesis brings to shed light on the consequences, often unintended, of previous routine political relations between international and local actors, rather than on the sole decisions taken to respond to existing crises.

It is thus crucial to examine the *relation* between local political-military games and external, international actors' practices. The sole relations considered here involve international actors deployed for armed conflict management concerns; that is, after the crisis began (when violence sparks). Yet, this routine, middle run, prospect still applies in our view, for at least three reasons. First, international conflict management actors obviously encompass national diplomatic and military apparatuses, localised in the region or faraway, which entertained political relations before the crisis. Second, even if the hypothesis that actors would liaise with one another for the first time with the current crisis, experience shows that conflict management often opens long sequences of intervention that lingers beyond critical moments, in incessant times of security improvement and relapse. In this sense, targeted states often already harbour international interventions and programs when critical moments occur. They occur in the middle of more routinised peace operations, reconstruction programs or third-party mediation processes. Third, not only shall effects of these interventions be assessed in the eye of local actors in war-torn societies *directly concerned* by them, but also in the eye of political leaders *elsewhere*, who are potentially concerned by forthcoming armed conflict situations (in an offensive or defensive stance) and carefully assess what are the regularities among the international practices according to specific configurations. A crucial stake lies thus in our capacity to interpret the lessons these leaders are learning in a day-to-day basis.

International actions shall thus 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). And there are unfortunately many instances where this competition for new international resources incited a use of highly visible violence (Tull and Mehler, 2005; Hoffman, 2004).

In order to measure the effects of external actions on armed conflicts, therefore, international actors must be considered as a part of a broader system of political conflict that enables the use of violence by the parties. Such system results from mingled calculations and practical necessities that need to be considered in order to weigh international actors' effects on the

local dynamics of the conflict and eventually consider how they could have proceeded more efficiently.

Our present approach mobilises the notion of *role*, in the sense constructivist and interactionist sociologists accord it. It allows dubbing specific relations between international actors and local ones in regard to repeated interactions and practices among particular groups and institutions, beyond officially, bureaucratically-built purposes announced as to justify these relations. It offers a promising standpoint, far from problem-solving approaches that often turn local political processes into aberrant or even pathological anomalies, thus dismissing puzzling local politics and "statehood" and the potential effects of international actions in this realm (Zartman, 1995; Collier, 2000; see Hagmann and Péclard, 2010; Marchal and Messiant, 2002; Richards, 2004, for critical views). It also brings to contest critical approaches when they tend to overestimate what international actors are able to collectively control and achieve in their own interests (Duffield, 2007) in a context of frequent operational improvisation and material scarcity, not mentioning political incoherence and indifference (Chandler, 2006; Stedman, 2002).

Although many different roles may be singled out, our three study cases eventually shed light on three roles (present in each case in various extents) progressively assigned to international actors in their day-to-day relations with local belligerents. The first one will not surprise anyone: the *third party mediation / facilitation* role stands closer to international conflict managers' announced goals. The second role points out the *protection* offered by external – most often military – actors to one party – regimes and their state institutions in many instances – against the others. The third role encompasses international efforts bringing local belligerent partners to transform their political institutions, practices and even their internal hierarchies and leadership.

Below, we first present these three roles according to how we were confronted with their manifestations in our study cases, and then raise some lessons about favourable and unfavourable configurations concerning the exercise of these roles.

Third-Party Mediators, Protectors and Reformers: Three Roles for the International Interveners and their Practical Contents

Sociologically conceived, the role leans on specific collective expectations, that is, norms, shared in specific interacting groups of people. These expectations are nothing but social rules that refer to routine practices embedded in the everyday interaction without visible institutionalisation, and even sometimes without verbal rationalisation, much more than intellectually-coherent and ethically-grounded sets of ideas, as sociologists revealed with the notion of practical rationality (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 on real governance in African administrations, with the notion of *practical norm* (Olivier de Sardan, 2008). David Ambrosetti added the sociological dimension of *social sanction* to this notion of practical norm in order to reframe the use of the concept of role and apply it to diplomats serving to the UN Security Council, as specific groups of social agents within international organisations in charge of peace and security matters (Ambrosetti, 2009, 2010). We borrowed from this framework in our study, and eventually designed three specific roles from how international actors related with local belligerents in Sierra Leone, DRC and Burundi.

Mediation and Facilitation

No doubt, foreign states and international organisations rarely commit themselves in others' armed conflicts without initially aspiring to a third-party position between the belligerents. This stems from a more or less explicit model of consensual process whereby an impartial and independent third-party works at favouring the communication between conflicting parties in order for them to search for a common solution. Mediating actors induce and lead the negotiation process, whereas facilitators intervene in preliminary stages and leave the process once negotiations are on tracks. Both may use a wide range of means of actions as to influence the mediation process: specific proposals, discrete / public mediations, pressure on the belligerents, etc.

1990s Burundi better exemplifies different international actors lingering for long in such a mediating role (Anouilh, 2010; Chrétien, 2000; Chrétien and Mukuri, 2002).

When the internationally-backed efforts for democratisation starkly failed with the October 1993 military coup, killing the newly elected president Melchior Ndadaye (a Hutu civilian), international diplomacies to the UN were only ready to let Boutros Boutros Ghali send mediation teams (first James Jonah, then Ahmedou Ould Abdallah) in order to open ways to resume dialogue about the institutions of transition between the former "parti unique" (Uprona) supporting the precedent military pro-Tutsi regime led by Major Paul Buyoya, and the new majority, pro-Hutu party winner of the June 1993 elections (Frodebu). In the "post-Somalia" context (the humiliating defeat of the UN / U.S.-led UNOSOM II operation in October 1993, after the glorified humanitarian Restore Hope operation in Somalia of December 1992), the UN Security Council permanent members firmly exclude (save the French delegation) any military force aimed at supporting the negotiation process. The OAU defended the project of a military observation mission (MIPROBU), which would remain too modest, and never welcomed by the parties.

Negotiations would work at fashioning power-sharing institutions for the majority and opposition parties. But despite agreements signed in 1994, ethnic violence and radicalisation escalate from Tutsi military and militias in Bujumbura against Hutu civilians from March 1994 on, and pro-Hutu parties, notably Léonard Nyangoma's CNDD, support the creation in July of the pro-Hutu rebel *Forces de Défense de la Démocratie* (FDD). In spring 1995, violence exacerbated from both parts, including from clandestine, pro-Hutu parties (Palipehutu and Frolina), against Tutsi civilians. In fact, political parties would never commit themselves to the agreements, preferring preparing for the violent confrontation to come. One year after the genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda, a new genocide in the Great Lakes region is feared.

The OAU more deeply engaged into this Burundian deadlock, although bilateral financial backing and UN blessing would essentially result from Western countries active in diplomatic and security issues in the region. Mediation appeared as the best instrument in such ethnic-based conflicts between close coexistent adversaries (Wilkenfeld et alii, 2003). In this case, it

was led by high-profile negotiators, first Julius Nyerere, then Nelson Mandela. Nyerere adopted a firm stance against the Burundian regime when Pierre Buyoya seized power via a coup in July 1996. Tensions between Tanzania and Burundi aroused in 1997. Till his death in October 1999, Nyerere would be considered by the Burundian military regime a partial negotiator favouring the Frodebu against the Uprona.

The baton was then passed to Mandela, seconded by Jacob Zuma. They reached an agreement between the Frodebu and the military in August 2000 in Arusha for the constitution of an enlarged government. No ceasefire was reached. Combats intensify (particularly in July 2003) between the new transition government and the non signatory rebel movements, which undergo processes of fragmentation (between Pierre Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD, also the dissident Ndayikengurukiye's CNDD-FDD, as well as the two rival factions of the Palipehutu-FNL).

Subsequent mediations for peace negotiations came this time with international military deployments, with the first peace operation of the new African Union (AMIB) in 2003, supported by South Africa (and Uganda). In autumn 2003, Pretoria achieved to integrate Nkurunziza's movement in the transitional government and the army. Nkurunziza would eventually win presidential elections in 2005, under the auspices of a UN mission (MINUB). Burundi still knows today an instable political situation, despite it militarily contributes itself to other peace operations (the AU mission in Somalia).

Unmistakably, mediation forms a large part of what international conflict managers are expected to do towards belligerents. The urgent need for a third party mediation to favour peace negotiations equally emerged in the UN Secretariat alongside the UN mission in DRC in 1999 (MONUC) and in the OAU / African Union, contrarily to the AFDL rebellion during the autumn and winter 1996-97 that ousted Mobutu and propped up L.-D. Kabila in power in Kinshasa – here the sole audible motive of concern argument was humanitarian, with the "refugee crisis" and the attacks of the Rwandan Patriotic Army near Goma and Bukavu (Adelman and Suhrke, 1999; Ambrosetti, 2009; Cathelin, 2008; Hay, 1999; HRW / FIDH, 1997; Lemarchand, 2002; Pottier, 2002).

And the same shall be said about Sierra Leone, as the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee rapidly decided to deploy its ECOMOG troops in Sierra Leone as a way to support regional efforts for peace negotiations. In 1995-96, international actors (interested diplomacies and Bretton Woods institutions) prioritized general elections before peace negotiations. But as general violence resumed (after the May 1997 coup and in the winter 1998-99 rebel offensive towards Freetown), UNSC members interested by the dossier advocated for a rapid round of negotiations between the elected president, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, and the rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), resulting in the July 1999 Lomé agreement (Aning, 1994; Châtaigner, 2005; Ero, 2000; Keen, 2005; Olonisakin, 2008; Richards, 1996; Richards and Vincent, 2008).

In this case, as in the cases of the Lusaka agreement in DRC (1999) or in 2003 Burundi, one can note the trend consisting in reaching a peace agreement before rapidly deploying an international military interposition force as to assure the parties against their enemies' possible violations of their engagements. As we know, Brahimi's report reaffirmed this model (United Nations, 2000). Now, the question remains about the duration of the process without any force deployed on the field. Why was it so long in Burundi? What differed in Sierra Leone? Why no international military means were engaged during the Zairian crisis in 1996-1997? Why combats remained for so long despite ECOMOG's presence in Sierra Leone or despite the MONUC in DRC and the peace negotiation these missions are supposed to ease? Another dimension shall be considerer now. It refers to another role, less openly termed by international actors, and yet decisive.

Domestic stabilisation and Regime Protection

Analysts have been prone to record many instances of conflict management strategies from external actors (in Africa an elsewhere in the "global south") that 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). France and Francophone Africa after the independence provided a well-documented case in this realm (Ambrosetti, 2009, about patron-client relations in Rwanda; also Brysk, Parsons, and Sandholtz, 2002; Clapham, 1996, chapter 4). But

Christopher Clapham (ibid) recalls how African leaders devoid of protecting relations with previous colonial powers also resort to liaise with superpowers in order to assure their survival. According to this author, in the "real" everyday concerns of African political rulers, political survival was the key, in a context of institutional, material and symbolic scarcity. This turned into a powerful drive for political creativity and the quest of political relations with external actors, that is, a drive for extraversion (Bayart, 2000) and "negative sovereignty" (Jackson, 1990).

Such protective patron-client relations also arose in regional and international conflict management and peace operations. Nigeria in Sierra Leone, under the auspices of the ECOWAS intervention in this country and Liberia, illustrates how such a patronage, even a "moderate" one, nevertheless did affect the course of the conflict.

In April 1991, the Sierra Leonean regime of Joseph Momoh alerts the UN following military assaults against its army by rebels (the RUF) visibly composed of elements of the *National Patriotic Front of Liberia* (NPFL), the rebel movement led by Charles Taylor against Samuel Doe's regime in Liberia. One element counted in the ability of the UN Security Council to remain then 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). They launched a military operation (ECOMOG), whose bulk essentially leant on Nigerian shoulders (80 % of the budget and 70 % of the deployed troops, according to Olonisakin, 2000: 109). After April 1991, ECOMOG was therefore expanded 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; Châtaigner, 2005; Keen, 2005; Olonisakin, 2008; Richards, 1996).

Initially, the deployment of the ECOMOG in Liberia then Sierra Leone in 1990 and 1991 is rooted in patron-client relations between the Nigerian president, general Ibrahim Babangida, and the Liberian and Leonean presidents, late Samuel Doe and Joseph Momoh (the latter and Babangida were former *Kaduna Army Staff College* mates, Olonisakin, 2000: 119). In September 1990, the ECOMOG does not act like a peacekeeping force, as there's precisely no peace to keep at the time. But it engages in peace enforcement, "limited offensive" actions against the rebels of the NPFL, as the latter already controls 90 % of the country (not yet Monrovia), opposes any ceasefire and directly targets the West African troops. According to Fumni Olonisakin, the ECOMOG military leadership understood by the end of 1990 that it'd better drop a pure protective and offensive action and would better adopt more cautious a stance aimed at stabilising the situation and favouring negotiations. Besides, the Nigerian patron rapidly lost his client, with Doe's dead, killed by Prince Yormeh Johnson's men, Charles Taylor's rival within the rebel movement, on September 9, 1990. Yet, it was too late, as defiance remained high on the side of the NPFL vis-à-vis the Nigerians (Olonisakin, 2000: 164). And ECOMOG leaders were now playing their credibility as regional stabilisers (at least as much as bilateral protectors) and could not afford military challenges disrespecting the solutions they promoted. Therefore, times of negotiations only served rebels' rearmament. And harsh combats resume from April 1992 on. ECOMOG (and UN troops altogether) eventually left when the UN-promoted elections in Liberia brought Charles Taylor to power in August 1997.

ECOMOG's action in Liberia turned into an ambiguous stance in Sierra Leone. In this country, containing Taylor's destabilising enterprise was at stake. Moreover, Taylor's material support to the RUF's leader Foday Sankoh stemmed from lust for diamonds resources in the border region, but also from a will for revenge after Momoh's rapid contributing troops to the ECOMOG fighting against the NPFL in Liberia. Nevertheless, as Liberia was absorbing the biggest part of the ECOMOG means, this force limited its goals in Sierra Leone to the protection of Freetown and Lungi airport, whereas ECOMOG troops were also fighting in the bordering forest zone, rich on diamonds.

This had two consequences. The first concerned the intractability of the conflict between rebels and the authorities; the second, the domestic instability within the political elites in

Freetown. First and foremost, as vital interests for the Leonean political institutions' survival were secured, everyone seemed to accommodate with the RUF lingering in large zones of the country, from where it pursued for years its strategy for conquest, whether using low intensity fighting against the Sierra Leonean Army (SLA) or, later, indiscriminate violence against civilians in rural areas and small cities in order to offset military weakness and avoid political marginalisation (Richards, 1996: 85). The conflict was contained and ossifying by the same token.

Secondly, this protection offset president Momoh's inability to found a genuine national effort against the rebels, as his party (All People Congress, APC, favouring Northerners, notably the Limba), was ruling since 1968 and developed a system of acute authoritarianism, corruption and nepotism based on an informal economic networks (what William Reno will term a "shadow state"). This form of government sharply divided the society and also the military (between the capital and the rest of the country, between Northerners and Southerners, between APC fellows and SLPP opponents, etc.) (Keen, 2005; Richards, 1996). Consequently, military elites were much more exerted in politics than in war making, and could not protect properly civilians in the provinces. The ECOMOG made an operationally efficient army useless, and dissuaded any effort to open the internal political scene and the top positions into the administration and the army.

Thus, if the ECOMOG could avoid the RUF entering Freetown alone, it could not avoid internal dissensions and finally military coups within such a politically divided army. April 1992 coup against Momoh brought young officers to power, supported by the SLPP opposition (and by the future president Kabbah). But, after some successes against the RUF, the new leadership remained militarily weak and resorted to mobilise local militias (Kamajors, Mende traditional armed groups) turned into Civil Defence Forces, and even contracted the South African security company Executive Outcomes to protect diamonds fields. Thus arms and violence were disseminating in different places of the country. Worryingly, the situation did not change with the 1996 general elections and the victory of Kabbah and the SLPP, as many military leaders remained faithful to Momoh. In May 1997, they finally opted for an unacceptable solution according to the ECOMOG: an alliance with the RUF and a coup against internationally-backed president Kabbah. Combats and violence

then skyrocketed as the ECOMOG fiercely fought to oust the junta allied with the rebels and restore Kabbah in power. The May 1997 coup and the new RUF offensive in Freetown in December 1998-January 1999 progressively convinced the UN Security Council to stop counting on the sole regional "subcontracting" force and to commit into this dossier, through renewed peace negotiations (Lomé) then military deployment (UNAMSIL) supporting and protecting the elected thus "legitimate" president Kabbah.

The ECOMOG protector learnt how hazardous could be day-to-day relations aimed at solely assuring the regime's survival (even when the intervener accepts that her protégé's identity changes – from Momoh to V. Strasser then A. T. Kabbah) and containing hostile forces, at the exclusion of other concerns regarding internal governance and the roots of the conflict. It brought the Nigerian military leadership far from what they initially were ready to go.

Zaire / DRC and Burundi unfolded on the contrary some possible effects when no international actor at all is ready to assume any protecting role. As we saw above, before 2003, Burundi obtained no protective offer from international actors. Fragmentation and stark divisions among political parties, rebel movements and the military, as well as regional interferences, probably appeared too risky a configuration, compared to the expected outcomes of an international involvement. Besides, if the political leadership endured high instability, the main political force in the country, the army, never faced a serious military threat from rebel movements.

In Zaire Mobutu lost his protectors in 1996 (the U.S. state department dropped him, France was not able anymore to send troops on a bilateral basis in the Great Lakes region after the Rwandan genocide, and the UNSC and Canada finally abandoned their planned humanitarian operation "Assurance"), with dire consequences in the level of violence against Rwandan refugees. DRC's new master (L.-D. Kabila) fell down in a new war of regional dimension when precisely he defied his former patrons (Rwandan, Burundian and Ugandan armies) and was bound to found new powerful protectors, in Angola and Zimbabwe, with the effect to dramatically regionalise the conflict. Like in Sierra Leone from the end of 1993 to 1997, Congolese belligerents rested on a sort of collective acquiescence for a military competition with implicit territorial sharing out and low intensity combats for the control of "*zones utiles*"

economically. Incentives to find a negotiated political arrangement were low. And the MONUC did not initially appeared robust enough to protect whoever (even its own staff). Only Kabila's death and his replacement by his son Joseph brought interested diplomacies within the UNSC to take the lead and assume some supportive role towards the transitional government in Kinshasa.

But in the cases of the MONUC in Congo or the MINUB in Burundi, the supported governments were harbouring rebel groups according to power-sharing arrangements. And in these cases plus in the case of the UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, a third role complemented initial protective / deterrent and mediating roles.

A Transformative Impetus on Local Institutions

International actors involved in African crises have for long attempted influence the belligerents not only to negotiate with one another but also to reform themselves, to change their ruling the territories and populations under their control, to change the institutions whereby they exert their power. Remember the international pressure for multiparty democracy in Burundi since 1991, and its tragic outcome with the October 1993 events provoking no reactions within the international scene. When Boutros-Ghali sent James Jonah in Burundi, his main message was to ask the authorities in Bujumbura to depoliticise the army and rebuild civil institutions. In Sierra Leone, Western diplomacies and the IMF strongly advocated for prioritising general elections in order to strengthen the governmental interlocutor (then led by a junta and split by its divisions into the army) and make it internationally more acceptable before opening peace negotiations with the RUF. This obsession for formal electoral democracies triggered out many criticisms.

Today international post-conflict management in transitional situations encompasses a large gamut of practices, a genuine engineering aimed at reforming the central political institutions, specifically when the regime is under the pressure of centrifugal forces, which might threaten the already precarious political balance. Let us mention the numerous programs in DDR, rule of law, SSR, reforms of the legal system, and more recently the transformation of rebel movements into political parties, etc. In their affirmed goals, these programs are never short of ambitions. They therefore inspire discussions or criticisms in regard to their apparent

intrusiveness or their inefficiency on the field (Chandler, 2007; Duffield, 2007; Paris, 2004). A slightly different standpoint, though, consists in observing the precise terms on which actors agree locally in an everyday basis as to change their political institutions and practices, above the technocratic goals largely announced.

In DRC, international actors were reluctant to support the parties (the Congolese authorities and diverse militias more or less supported by them, the rebel groups – RCD-Goma, RCD-K/ML and MLC) after their signing the Lusaka agreement in 1999 and obtaining the deployment of a far from robust UN mission (the MONUC and its limited means and loose mandate) in this huge territory harbouring many rival foreign armies and fragmenting armed groups. Since Joseph Kabila will inspire international interest and confidence as the new leader of the DRC, supports will gradually come ask for power-sharing with the main rebel groups (supported by Rwanda and Uganda) and for other institutional reforms. After the comprehensive peace agreement signed in Pretoria in December 2002, the UNSC looked for a successful election in DRC and backed Kabila without exerting too much pressure on rebels Rwandan and Ugandan supports. Kabila won the elections in 2006. Despite the announced intentions, SSR and DDR would hardly progress in DRC, particularly concerning Kabila's *Garde présidentielle* and the new rebel movement appeared in 2005, Laurent Nkunda's CNDP (Autesserre, 2010; Tull, 2009).

SSR also throve in Sierra Leone, for the military and the police, sponsored by the British military and the DfID from 2000 to 2010 (Leboeuf, 2005), whereas civilian peace managers intended to transform the RUF into a banal political party, ready to participate in general polls and accept its almost inevitable defeat (Richards and Vincent, 2008).

Endorsing Roles: Prospects and Challenges for International Actors

This section aims at proposing some lessons learned through the methodological framework we applied to our three study cases. We identify a few configurations of international interventions. Our objective is twofold: we first seek to expose some of the main challenges

international actors face when endorsing one of these roles. Then, we scrutinize how two or three roles may overlap, and with which consequences on the dynamics of the conflicts.

Third-Party Mediators, and the Use of Selective Retributions and Coercion

Mediation processes are often hazardous and particularly constrained. Here we address two issues that we found recurrent in the cases studied: the possible top-down distinction between good and bad local partners for a mediation process or the inclusion of all actors, and the appropriate use of force in support of the process.

First emerges the question of the selectivity among local armed groups and political forces, that is, mediators' constant temptation to prioritise "sensible" and "moderate" interlocutors at the expense of more violent and/or inflexible ones. Such choices often arise in the course of the interaction between international mediators and representatives of local forces. And matters of mutual understanding and personal affinities between them can frequently spoil the process or save the day. In Burundi, between 1993 and 1996, the military as well as the political elites opposed any direct discussion with the rebel forces (FDD). International mediators did not overcome this trend, as the UN and the OAU mainly dealt with setting elections or negotiating power sharing arrangements between non-fighting forces. On the whole, this selective strategy proves often itself counterproductive. Excluding the rebel groups directly contributed to the radicalising conflict and polarising the parties. The subsequent spread of violence triggered out Pierre Buyoya’s coup in 1996. At the end of the 1990s, mediators switch their strategies as to work on an inclusive negotiation process, including those formerly dubbed "terrorists".

Second, concerning the use of coercion (or the threat to do so) by a mediating actor, our cases revealed some possible opportunities a mediator able to enforce its promoted solutions could have seized, as to draw clear limits into the mediation process for the parties and thus deter strategic resorts to violence during the process, as well as to assure reluctant parties that negotiations will not offer military opportunities to their rivals. Facing a diplomatic deadlock, the mediator appears as the best agent to put such a strategy into action (which requires strong capacities of influence, material and symbolical). Such practices are nonetheless risky, as a mediation process shall first be acceptable for all to get some chance of viability. A mediation

process becoming punchy may undermine mediator's perceived impartiality by the parties, whatever her initial preferences. Ascribing to different actors the mediator role and the role of enforcing the collectively acknowledged dispositions offers an obvious reply in this realm. The UN Secretariat even worked hard to avoid reintegrating the former Nigerian military leadership of the ECOMOG into the military command of the new UN deploying mission in the country in 1999, as a way to impulse a new start in rebels, politicians and civilians' minds and avoid confusion with a force notoriously known as anti-RUF. The Indian Major General Vijay Kumar Jetley was thus appointed UNAMSIL Force Commander (Olonisakin, 2008: 118).

Also note that including all parties to a mediating process does not prevent international actors from working at weakening and marginalising one of them, through incentives (cooptation, profit sharing, removal) or coercion (expulsion, individualized imprisonments etc), as the UNAMSIL action towards the RUF demonstrated in Sierra Leone after the Lomé inclusive agreement (Olonisakin, 2008; Richards and Vincent, 2008).

Armed Protectors, a Double-Edged Commitment

Unsurprisingly, the examination of our case studies demonstrate that, for a protective action to be "successful", coherence between the operational objectives and the resources allowed to any military action seems much required. When international actors fail to endorse this armed protective role, while claiming to do so (see for instance the gap between the coercive mandate of the MONUC and its operational results until 2006), they face the risk of discredit among local actors. For instance, the fact the MONUC proved unable to carry out proper protection towards the Congolese populations between 2001 and 2004 deeply affected its credibility, and more broadly its capacity to foster a negotiated issue to the conflict.

A loose protective stance, even when violence remains low in intensity, may also reproduce the military competition between belligerent and make conflicts escalate on the ground (remind of the instable status quo equilibriums reached in 1993-1995 in Sierra Leone or in initial times (1998-2000) of the second war in DRCongo, which made the conflict more intractable). And besides, even when moderately offensive (like the ECOMOG in 1990-1995 Sierra Leone), international actors bear the risk of becoming directly targeted by military

fighting, and might thus become more and more embedded in the local conflict dynamics (the 1993 Somalia paradigm, when international troops stand as *one armed group among the others* in everyone's eyes). Last but not least, as it is well acknowledged, international actors must rely on a firm exit strategy in order to avoid the perpetuation of violence. There are numerous examples that illustrate the risks posed by direct confrontation with one or more armed groups, from Somalia to DRC, from Iraq to Afghanistan today.

Clearly, the case studies demonstrate that protective actions are more than often too risky. International actors have therefore shown, especially in Africa, a growing unwillingness towards protective operations. This is particularly the case when national political institutions are undermined by nepotism and conflicting relations among administrative and military elites. In Sierra Leone, because of an over-politicised and unruly national army entrenched in conflicting political networks attached to the great rival political parties (APC and SLPP), ECOMOG had to pay a high price with numerous casualties resulting from the heavy fighting with the pro-APC mutineers allied with the RUF in the May 1997 coup.

By any means, a protective role consists in betting on a local partner, be it one of the initial belligerents alone or a representative of a large coalition government. Risks thus come from possible instability within the partner side, be it from coups or military drawbacks or uncontrolled violence from its armed men. When engaging in protective actions, international actors should first clearly state and agree upon which institutions deserve their protection, till which level of involvement they might go, and they should draw a clear line (in an ideal world) between acceptable and unacceptable practices from the partner side. In Sierra Leone, UNSC members came to identify the army – and the officers closed to the former ruling party APC – as a key factor of instability. They therefore favoured a renewed civilian leadership (not forgetting to mention linked militias, like Sam Hinga Norman's CDF combatants loyal to the SLPP), thanks to general elections, at the expense of the former militaries whom they did not trust. In doing so, however, they propelled the 1997-1998 confrontation between president Kabbah and the mutineers (led by Johnny Paul Koroma) loyal to Momoh and the ACP party.

The protecting role conditions international actors' overall credibility to their ability to defend their *protégés* and contain the latter' enemies. Impartiality fades away in such case. In Côte

d'Ivoire, for instance, UNSC leading members on this dossier judged more urgent to take side and affirm their resolute, even military, support to the winner of the elections whose results they were asked to certify, than to stick to the traditional sense of impartiality expected from the UN. On the contrary, MONUC's troops inability to effectively perform their mandate in protecting the state institutions all over the country provided the numerous rebel groups acting at the east of the Congo with a broad sentiment of impunity and discredited the MONUC leadership.

Endorsing a protective role requires considerable means of actions, as well as a strong consensus among international actors, though. Most of the time, these conditions are not met. Therefore, international actors should, whenever possible, look for other paths of conflict resolution.

Reformers, or How to Twist Partners' Arms

The first envisaged transformation may concern the political leadership of the supported regime itself, that is, the identity of the "recipients". In situation of domestic political deadlock or international disagreements, regenerating the politico-militaries elites can be deemed providential (Sierra Leone 1995-96, Zaire 1996).

Several means may be used. Let us mention three. (1) Elections have often been used as a way of putting an end to a situation of violence. Elections can be considered in two ways: as a mean of renewal of political elites, and as a way to politically defeat armed rebel groups. In Burundi in 1993 as in Sierra Leone in 1996, these democratic experiments proved inconclusive, since both processes ended up with a coup and skyrocketing violence. Both processes also took place in a highly volatile and polarized situation, while the political institutions were weakened by highly personalized processes. (2) International actors can also choose not to interfere in an enduring military conquest of power, as in 1996 Zaire at the expense of Mobutu's regime. And (3) in a situation characterized by a lack of credible interlocutors (be it on the governmental side or on the rebel side), international actors may favour the emergence of a new political elite by supporting the political activist of the Diaspora (for instance in Sierra Leone, Tejan Kabbah was a former UNDP civil servant who spent a large part of his life in New York).

A second transformation targets preferably the political institutions as to achieve their consolidation on the long run, which might in turn revive local access to political and economic positions and local hierarchies. Today SSR programs mobilise much attention and means in this realm, requiring strong involvement from high-profile military trainers disposed to engage in such intrusive, but also perilous and risky activity (as the British leading the IMATT in Sierra Leone). From Sierra Leone to DRC through Burundi, and elsewhere, convincing results are still expected. Another recent key issue is the inclusion of rebel groups into this transformative process, and the challenges raised by the current attempts to turn former rebel groups into political parties (de Zeeuw, 2008). Practitioners would here frequently refer to "carrot and stick" day-to-day relations, depending on the political and military situation at work on the field and the capacity of rebel movements to jeopardize peace processes and resort back to violence, should they feel (or claim to be so) excluded from the forthcoming democratic institutions.

As they touch the marrow of power hierarchies and the use of coercion locally, such programs may upset still instable political balances, and thus be doomed to fail. International actors should therefore, whenever possible, be careful not to exclude others political forces, particularly the ones who did not join the military competition. Otherwise these groups may perceive the use of violence as the sole legitimate way in the political competition. Unfortunately, most of these programs have so far focused on the elites of the armed movements: theses elites benefited from an inflection of their careers. However, the results in terms of democratization (e.g. elite renewal and political alternatives) should be tempered.

Interactions between Transforming and Protecting Militarily

Now, nothing forbids in principle exploiting partners' dependent position toward external military protectors as a way to put pressure on the protected regime and trigger out some political changes (mainly in domestic governance). This may intervene well beforehand. Equally, sponsoring peace negotiations aimed at creating power-sharing arrangements and new institutions, may require, in critical moments, mobilising diplomatic and even military means in order to protect this new (although transitory) political order in the making. Let us mention the British military role in Sierra Leone after the May 2000 crisis or the French-led

European Union operation in Bunia, DRC (operation *Artémis*) in spring 2003. Subsequently, heed and resources (10% of MONUC staff) were dedicated to protecting central institutions and politicians in Kinshasa waiting for the general elections planed for 2005 (finally held in 2006). European Union did play a similar protecting role, although less offensive, in Kinshasa (and its airport) in 2006 with the EUFOR-DRC operation before and after the presidential elections, in parallel with the often intrusive role played by the CIAT, controlling many of Kinshasa government's practices. DDR and SSR were suspended to it, they were considered less urgent as long as violence (in the Kivus notably) remained low in their intensity and unable to make the elections derail.

In these instances, though, protecting military actions were supporting political solutions (transitory institutions) fashioned by internationally sponsored negotiations. It thus came after the initial spark of the armed conflict and violence, contrarily to initial protective patronage acknowledged between longstanding regimes and foreign actors.

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