

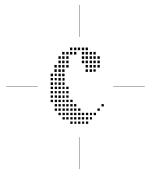
Conflict Policy Research Project (CPRP)

## **Between Indifference and Naïveté**

Dutch Policy Interventions in African Conflicts  
A Synthesis Report

Pyt Douma  
Klaas van Walraven

Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’  
Conflict Research Unit  
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Netherlands Institute of  
International Relations  
'Clingendael'  
Clingendael 7  
2597 VH The Hague  
P.O. Box 93080  
2509 AB The Hague  
Phonenumber: # 31-70-3245384  
Telefax: # 31-70-3282002  
Email: [research@clingendael.nl](mailto:research@clingendael.nl)  
Website: <http://www.clingendael.nl/cru>

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## Abbreviations

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AFDL	<i>Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Kinshasa</i>
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAR	<i>Forces Armées Rwandaises</i>
FoI	Friends of IGAD
GoS	Government of Sudan
IAC	International Advisory Committee
ICGL	International Contact Group on Liberia
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority for Development
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
IPF	IGAD Partners Forum
LDF	Lofa Defence Force
LPC	Liberian Peace Council
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIF	New Islamic Front
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
RCD	<i>Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie</i>
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SAF	Sudan Allied Forces
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SSDF	Southern Sudan Defence Force
SSIA	South Sudan Independence Army
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement for Democracy
ULIMO-J	United Liberation Movement for Democracy (Johnson's faction)
ULIMO-K	United Liberation Movement for Democracy (Kromah's faction)
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda
UNAMSIL	United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone
UNMEE	United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea

UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
US(A)	United States (of America)

## Introductory Remarks

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This report constitutes a synthesis of three case studies of intrastate conflicts in Africa, which were researched in the context of the Conflict Policy Research Project, executed by the Netherlands Institute of International Affairs 'Clingendael' for the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The conflicts concerned are the civil wars in Liberia, Rwanda and Sudan. The details of these conflicts and the policy interventions undertaken by the Netherlands and other actors *vis-à-vis* these countries can be found in the respective reports.<sup>1</sup> In all cases, the analyses of Dutch policy interventions were based on empirical data culled from Dutch Foreign Ministry files, interviews and a field visit in the case of Rwanda. For discussion on methodology and the selection of data one is referred to the three country studies.

Before the main conclusions and arguments of these reports are presented, however, a few words should be devoted to the concept of 'intervention' as used in this synthesis study. One definition refers to intervention as a 'portmanteau term which covers a wide variety of situations where one actor intervenes in the affairs of another'.<sup>2</sup> While this begs the question of what actually constitutes the intervening act, this definition has the advantage that it encompasses various forms of activity by one actor *vis-à-vis* another. International law relates intervention to other concepts such as 'internal affairs' and 'domestic jurisdiction' and in view of the domestic jurisdiction clause of the United Nations Charter (art. 2.7) it has been pointed out that one can only speak of intervention if the activity involved goes further than mere 'talk', *i.e.* oral and/or written communication between one actor and another - the target of its intervention.<sup>3</sup> In this report, however, any legal connotations and linkages to terms such as domestic jurisdiction and internal affairs are discarded. In recognition of the fact that the instruments of intervention are now much more refined and sophisticated than in the past - transforming intervention into a more pervasive phenomenon than ever before - this report considers a range of activities as falling under the concept. Thus, not only are military actions interpreted as intervention, but also activities in other areas, such as economics, development cooperation and, indeed, even 'mere' communication between one actor and the object of its intervention. This approach has the benefit that it underlines the importance of gradualism and incrementalism as

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- 1) M.V. van Baarsen (2000), *The Netherlands and Sudan: Dutch Policies and Interventions with respect to the Sudanese Civil War* (The Hague: Clingendael Institute); P. Douma (2000), *The Netherlands and Rwanda: A Case Study on Dutch Foreign Policies and Interventions in the Contemporary Conflict History of Rwanda* (The Hague: Clingendael Institute); and K. van Walraven (2000), *The Netherlands and Liberia: Dutch Policies and Interventions with respect to the Liberian Civil War* (The Hague: Clingendael Institute).
  - 2) G. Evans and J. Newnham (1990), *The Dictionary of World Politics: A Reference Guide to Concepts, Ideas and Institutions* (New York), p. 198.
  - 3) I. Brownlie (1979), *Principles of Public International Law* (Oxford), p. 294.

features of the intervention concept. In this sense, the intervention concept does not necessarily have to involve a rupture from conventional or ‘normal’ behaviour of one actor towards another.

Yet our definition of intervention, while allowing for any kind of activity (military, economic, political, diplomatic, cultural or other), is linked to *conflict* and the intention of the intervening actor to affect that conflict. Intervention is thus taken to mean or involve any activity in the above-mentioned areas that is intended to influence the course, intensity or scope of hostilities and/or activity geared at attenuating the effects of conflict. In this sense, intervention amounts to *conflict-related intervention*.

Such conflict-related intervention may thus involve, firstly, interventions that are aimed at influencing the hostilities (*i.e.* course, scope and intensity of the violence). One could think of political and diplomatic efforts to mediate a settlement; any form of military interventions to affect an end to or mitigation of the conflict; the provision of financial or logistical support to military operations; or the imposition of economic or military sanctions. Conflict-related intervention may, however, also involve activity geared at affecting the ‘dispute’, in the pre-hostilities phase, or the post-conflict, *i.e.* post-violence situation. Moreover, it also includes interventions that are aimed at attenuating the effects of a conflict through the provision of aid to war-stricken areas and populations, to help them survive the hostilities and get back on their feet once these have ended.

Conflict-related intervention involves an *intention* to influence the conflict and its effects. It should thus be distinguished from, what might be termed, *conflict-synchronous* intervention, *i.e.* intervention by an actor in the affairs of a country in conflict with an object other than affecting that conflict. It should in this respect be realized that countries may continue to conduct ‘normal’ ties or relations with countries engaged in violent domestic conflict. Such relations cannot easily be distinguished from the patterns of interaction as they were before large-scale violence erupted, and are marked by other rationales and objectives, such as the pursuit of one’s own economic, political or other interests, rather than the wish to end or mitigate the conflict. One needs to uphold this distinction in order to assess correctly policies towards countries in conflict.



# 1 Issues, Actors and Dynamics of Intrastate Conflicts

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## 1.1 Sudan

### *Causes of Conflict*

In Sudan, the major issue at stake is the north-south ethno-cultural divide involving a power struggle between northern Arab elite groups and southern elite groups of different ethnic origins. Control of natural resources located mainly in the southern regions is crucial for regime survival and widely considered the ultimate 'price' for the winner. The northern elite of Arab descent is a fairly homogeneous group, albeit internally divided between fundamentalist and more liberal groups on the issue of Islam as the guiding principle for the Sudanese state. All Arab groups, however, agree on the premise that the southern ethnic groups and their areas form an integral part of the Sudanese state. Southern groups, in contrast, have been historically subjugated to northern discriminatory behaviour and have been exposed to violent incursions in their regions. Consequently, the predominantly Arab political elite groups in control of the state bureaucracy and the army have very little credibility or legitimacy in the south. The ongoing conflict has been fuelled by the rather high-handed manner in which the northern elite has tried to control the exploitation of valuable natural resources, without recognizing local entitlements, as well as by an incapacity to broker a political compromise on a new constitution that would ensure minority rights for all ethnic groups inhabiting Sudan.

### *Actors*

The major actors in Sudan's civil war are the government of Sudan (GoS), the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and breakaway factions of the SPLA. The armed forces of the GoS consist of the national army and the so-called Popular Defence Forces. The SPLA army consists mainly of Dinka soldiers and recruits from other southern ethnic groups. The NDA is a nationwide umbrella movement that involves, besides the SPLA, a couple of northern rebel groups such as the Sudan Allied Forces (SAF) and the Beja Congress. In 1991, a group led by Riek Machar broke away from the SPLA to form the South Sudan Independence Army (SSIA). Initially, this group fought against both the GoS and the SPLA. In 1994, however, the SSIA joined the GoS and its leader became president of the GoS-initiated South Sudan Coordination Council - a façade government body that is devoid of real power. The SSIA has successfully taken control of the Bentiu oil wells and hence secured a source of income. The picture is further complicated by various ethnic militias, which from time to time change sides, supporting either the GoS, the NDA, or fighting on their own behalf. These militias can be broadly divided into two groups. One consists of an

amalgam of Islamicized pastoral peoples, which was armed by the GoS and encouraged to wage holy war against the Christian south. The other is made up of southern groups that fear Dinka domination. Their involvement in the war is related to rough power struggles between various self-appointed leaders with ethnic and economic interests at stake. They have contributed to the proliferation of hostilities, growing insecurity and the disruption of civilian activities.

### *Conflict Dynamics*

In 1960 open hostilities broke out between the southern Anya Nya movement and the GoS. From this period onwards a pattern of alliances emerged between the main internal actors and countries surrounding Sudan. Ethiopia and Somalia supported the Anya Nya movement, while the GoS received backing from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Nimeiri ousted the civilian government in 1969 and a peace settlement was brokered in 1972. The United States became an important benefactor of the GoS. The peace accord was, however, not supported by the radical Muslim community and Nimeiri was gradually forced to give in to their demands, leading to the introduction of Islamic law in 1983 for all Sudanese and an administrative redivision of the south entailing the loss of areas rich in oil.

These changes sparked off a second cycle of civil war in which the southern groups were organized in the Sudan People's Liberation Army led by John Garang. Between 1984 and 1988, the SPLA expanded its operations in southern Sudan, keeping large tracks of territory under its control. The GoS retaliated by arming ethnic Islamicized militias, inciting them to attack southern groups. This, in turn, provoked retaliation by ethnic militias in the south, initiating a cycle of ethnic violence at the local level.

When a peaceful settlement was imminent, another military *coup* took place: in 1989 al-Bashir assumed power with the support of the extremist New Islamic Front (NIF). Despite the *coup*, the SPLA won strategic battles and from early 1989 until May 1991 expanded its grip on the south. However, it was substantially weakened with the fall of the Ethiopian leader Mengistu, who had supported the SPLA. Internal divisions led to a split between a mainstream faction (SPLA-Torit) supporting Garang and a breakaway faction (SPLA-Nasir). The latter was eventually transformed into the SSIA, led by Machar.

Meanwhile, the Sudanese regime had become isolated from its erstwhile supporters. The United States had already imposed sanctions in 1989 and after Sudan's pro-Iraq stance in the Gulf War, support from Arab sponsors evaporated. Nevertheless, the GoS regained the military initiative, inflicting heavy losses on the SPLA-Torit. From May 1994 until February 1996, a military stalemate developed in which the GoS was unable to inflict a decisive blow on the ailing SPLA. As of February 1996, the newly established NDA gained military momentum and the Sudan Allied Forces attacked northern provinces, while the SPLA-Torit started an offensive in the south. By April 1997 a number of strategic towns had been captured. The GoS responded by incorporating breakaway southern rebel factions into the Southern Sudan Defence Force (SSDF) in an attempt to regain the initiative. The SSDF, however, quickly disintegrated when fighting erupted over control of important oil resources in Unity province. At present, the NDA also encounters problems, as the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea has led to a gradual reconciliation between the GoS and Eritrea and resulted in diminished Eritrean support for the NDA.

## 1.2 Rwanda

### *Causes of Conflict*

In Rwanda, despite a common culture, history and language, differences have been manipulated to create a notion of separate ethnic identities, which became institutionalized through successive historical developments, reinforced by colonial domination. This rather artificial cleavage led to a fierce power struggle between Hutu and Tutsi groups, with the latter in a dominant position. However, the Hutu elite grasped the opportunity to wrestle power from the Tutsi elite, which was condoned and supported by the erstwhile colonial power - Belgium. A hate campaign was unleashed against the former Tutsi elite, resulting in mass slaughter and forced migration to neighbouring countries. The post-independence history has time and again witnessed the repetition of this pattern. The Tutsi community in exile founded the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which challenged the Hutu regime in order to guarantee a return of the Tutsi community and restoration of civil rights.

Structurally, Rwanda has faced increasing land pressure as a result of population growth. Coffee and tea are the country's main exports and are subject to the usual fluctuations in world commodity prices. As a resource-poor country there are few alternative sources of income. Furthermore, technical innovations were introduced at a rather slow pace and received scant government attention. The resulting overpopulation produced nationwide social tensions and created a fertile breeding ground for racist propaganda, issued by extremist political movements. Moreover, at the end of the 1980s Rwanda's economic performance diminished substantially. This led to a crisis in the fragile political system, which depended strongly on policies of co-optation and the maintenance of a large clientelist sub-system. There was increasingly less income to divide among the ruling Habyarimana regime's growing group of political clients.

### *Actors*

Prior to the genocide there was a limited number of actors: the *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR); a regular standing army fighting on behalf of the Hutu-dominated government; and the Tutsi-led RPF. During the early 1990s sections of the army and the administration established a number of Hutu militias (such as the Interahamwe and Impuzamugambi), which helped in the execution of the genocide. These militias continued to play a role in the aftermath of the genocide, as they initiated an insurgency campaign from Hutu refugee camps in eastern Zaire (Kivu). The RPF, later the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), incorporated a substantial number of FAR soldiers after its military victory in July 1994. A substantial number of FAR men, nevertheless, fled to neighbouring Zaire, where many were annihilated during the successful campaign against Mobutu's regime led by the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Kinshasa* (AFDL) in 1996 and the August 1998 rebellion of the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD). Both Congolese rebel movements were supported by the RPA.

### *Conflict Dynamics*

The mass expulsion of Tutsis at independence and the exclusionary nature of the one-party Hutu state that emerged in 1962 provide the background of the Rwandan conflict. It entered a tensing phase when the RPF invaded Rwanda in October 1990. The RPF, although initially almost defeated on the battlefield, retreated to the mountains in the north-west of Rwanda (Virunga), from where it recovered

and launched military incursions. Peace negotiations were initiated in Arusha (Tanzania), leading to an agreement in August 1993. Internally, Habyarimana faced extremist opposition to a settlement with the RPF; and a power transition was secretly organized by forming armed militias and an alternative power structure, the Zero Network. Habyarimana's death in April 1994 triggered the onslaught on the Tutsi minority and a substantial number of so-called Hutu moderates, *i.e.* Hutus not affiliated with extremist political movements or militias. An estimated total of between 500,000 and 800,000 Tutsis and about 30,000 Hutus were killed. Meanwhile, the war between the RPF and the Hutu-dominated FAR army resumed. The RPF managed to overrun FAR positions in the eastern parts of Rwanda within weeks of the April 1994 events. Yet it took until July 1994 before it managed to capture the capital Kigali and the town of Butare. By then, the genocide had nearly been completed. The French military intervention Opération Turquoise, allegedly initiated as a humanitarian intervention and backed as such by the international community, temporarily halted the RPF advance, but by the end of August 1994 the entire country was under RPF control.

As a result of the genocide, millions of Hutus took refuge in neighbouring countries, fearing Tutsi/RPF reprisals. The refugees resettled in camps bordering Rwanda, where they received massive humanitarian aid. The ousted regime turned the camps into a replica rump state threatening the new Tutsi regime in Rwanda. A guerrilla campaign was launched from within the refugee camps, spearheaded by the remainder of the FAR and the extremist militias. From the autumn of 1994 until the end of 1998, notably the north-western part of Rwanda (the traditional stronghold of the defeated government) became a war theatre, threatening the internal security of Rwanda to the point of regime collapse. In order to counter these destabilizing developments, the Tutsi regime assisted rebel movements in eastern Zaire both in August 1996 and in August 1998.

The ensuing regional security crises eventually produced an inter-African war between Rwanda and Uganda on the one hand, and Kabila's forces supported by, among others, Zimbabwe and Angola on the other. The stabilization and control of eastern Congo became Rwanda's primary objective, which was accomplished at the end of 1998. After that, extremist activities subsided noticeably and the RPA established security in the whole of Rwanda.

### 1.3 Liberia

#### *Causes of Conflict*

In Liberia the major issue was the exclusionary policies of a small class of Americo-Liberians, who oppressed the indigenous population and legitimized their domination with the Western cultural values that they professed. Social and political exclusion was solidified by a closely knit cultural network underlying the Americo-Liberian community, kept together by intermarriage and institutions of social life, church and business.

This system opened up only very gradually to include other groups, making the exclusive hold on power more precarious. Thus, from the early 1970s the army began to co-opt elements from alienated sectors of Liberian society. Then in 1980 Samuel Doe, an uneducated army sergeant, took power in a bloody *coup* that led to a regime largely based on resentment over past social deprivation. The administration was driven by a desire for personal enrichment, and initiated a policy of ethnic patronage on behalf of the Krahn, the President's ethnic group. Due to a failed counter-*coup*, brutal repression was unleashed against specific ethnic groups - notably the Mano and Gio. This, in turn, set the stage for the civil war that began in 1989 with an invasion from the territory of Ivory Coast by the

National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), a guerrilla group led by Charles Taylor. The NPFL enjoyed support from the Mano and Gio and, more generally, disaffected elements from the rural areas and other West African countries. It had successfully tapped a large reservoir of youths from Liberia and across the West African region that over the years had seen non-violent ways to power and wealth blocked by incumbent regimes.

Naturally, this was a source of concern to West Africa's ruling elites. Some of these, such as the Nigerian and Guinean governments, also had vested economic interests in and personal ties with the Doe regime, something that pitted them squarely against the NPFL insurgency. In contrast, the leaders of both Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso had personal motives for ousting Doe and supporting Taylor. In 1980 Doe had killed the erstwhile President of Liberia, Tolbert, and his son, who were tied to the Ivorian regime through marriage. The Burkinabè leadership subsequently became associated with the widow of Tolbert Jr., as well as Charles Taylor. The difference in West African postures on the Liberian situation was, in addition, fuelled by a struggle for regional hegemony, in which countries such as Ivory Coast, France and Libya opposed the Nigerian claim to West Africa's leadership. Consequently, Liberia's civil war did not just constitute an intrastate conflict, but from the very start also involved a crisis in West African relations manifesting itself in the Liberian theatre.

### *Actors*

Throughout the conflict Taylor's NPFL was the most important actor. Doe's army, the Krahn-dominated Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), initially formed the major force confronting the NPFL. However, in the course of the civil war groups broke away to form new factions. In 1990, after a military stalemate had been reached in Monrovia between the AFL and the NPFL, a new faction appeared under Prince Johnson, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). The INPFL was defeated in 1992 by Taylor's NPFL. The proliferation of factions continued for a variety of reasons, such as the ethno-political factionalism and underlying patronage systems that had been a feature of Liberian politics well before the outbreak of war; the poor training and lack of discipline of the factional armies; and the feuding and ruthless pursuit of personal gain by their leadership.

Facilitated by the AFL and the INPFL, the ECOMOG intervention force landed in Monrovia in 1990. As shown in the next chapter, ECOMOG was fielded mainly by Nigeria and other countries opposed to Taylor (Guinea-Conakry, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Gambia) with the objective of coming to the aid of Doe and, when it appeared he was beyond rescue, of stopping Taylor in his tracks. Hence, from the beginning ECOMOG constituted an additional actor in the civil war and not a neutral intervening force fielded to mediate a peaceful settlement as such. Its mandate was therefore strongly contested by Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso.

ECOMOG, in turn, assisted in the establishment of other factions opposed to the NPFL, such as the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO), which consisted of Krahn and Mandingo elements. In 1994, ULIMO split, however, into the Mandingo-dominated ULIMO-K and the Krahn faction ULIMO-J, named after their leaders Alhaji Kromah and Roosevelt Johnson respectively. Meanwhile, other groups had emerged such as the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), which was supported by the AFL and ECOMOG and confronted the NPFL. In retaliation, the NPFL fielded the Lofa Defence Force (LDF) to fight against ULIMO. When ULIMO split, the LPC joined ULIMO-K in supporting Taylor against ULIMO-J and AFL/ECOMOG.

Finally, the former political class - consisting of members of the old Americo-Liberian elite residing in Monrovia - vainly tried to broker a non-violent solution through the formation of an interim government and the formulation of a peace plan, consistently asking for demilitarization of

the actors on the ground. However, the interim government helped to legitimize the presence of ECOMOG, which in some ways represented its armed wing. The civilian politicians never managed to exert significant influence on the military and political developments that took place during the war.

### *Conflict Dynamics*

It would be hard to distinguish clear-cut phases in the Liberian hostilities. The *coup* in 1980 can be viewed as the beginning of an extensive tensing phase, culminating in the NPFL's invasion in 1989. From then on, the conflict was marked by occasional flare-ups during which hostilities reached new levels of scope and intensity, while periods during which official ceasefires were in place were characterized by sporadic violence at lower levels of intensity. The most intensive rounds of fighting took place during 1990, the autumn of 1992 and in April 1996. From 1990 until October 1992 Taylor had the military initiative, although ECOMOG's intervention led to a stalemate, especially in and around the capital. From October 1992 until 1994 the NPFL was weakened by the combined forces of ULIMO and ECOMOG. When ULIMO split into its Mandingo and Krahn sections, its military capacity to take on the NPFL was weakened. Taylor's forces managed to survive and retook the initiative in 1995-1996. ECOMOG then sought a way out of the quagmire and a political compromise was reached between Taylor and Nigeria.

## **1.4 The Conflicts in Comparison**

The causes of the conflicts in Sudan, Rwanda and Liberia can be traced back to the nature of politics in the respective countries. In all cases, exclusionary policies led to growing discontent among disenfranchised segments of the population. In Liberia a small socio-political elite monopolized political and economic power to the detriment of all other constituent groups. In Rwanda minority rule had been succeeded by majority rule at independence, but, in fact, a small Hutu political elite was accumulating wealth and power under the guise of a majority one-party system. In Sudan a specific pattern of elite in-fighting between Muslim extremists and army officers led to recurrent power transfers, combining coercion and populist rhetoric with racist and religious undertones in an effort to maintain northern domination over the south. In all three cases the incumbent elite failed to incorporate genuine interest in the articulation of minority or majority groups, which continue to be disenfranchised in the current political setting.

The conflicts materialized through combinations of country-specific factors, but in general a deteriorating macroeconomic situation led to a crisis in the system of patronage underlying the political fabric of these societies, threatening each regime's survival. This, in turn, sparked off violent power struggles that led to various outcomes. In Sudan the existing Arab elite secured power, albeit in changing coalitions among various interest groups. In Rwanda the civil war resulted in a successful power transition from the Hutu majority to the Tutsi minority, restoring the pre-independence pattern of minority domination. In Liberia a chain of power transitions took place, from the Americo-Liberians to the Krahn-dominated Doe regime, to the Taylor-led government in 1997. Ironically, to some extent Taylor's administration signified a return to influence from the Americo-Liberians and, after 1997, a gradual loss of influence for the Manos and Gios that had constituted the backbone of the NPFL.

The richness of natural resources in Liberia and Sudan attracted the attention of local and international actors that sought to manipulate actors and groups to their own benefit. The continuation of hostilities can, in fact, be traced to the political economies underlying these conflicts. In all cases

incumbent elites sought to secure revenues from natural resources, export commodities or external donor support or a combination of these. The duration of the civil war in Liberia and notably the resilience of Taylor's NPFL can be traced to the control and exploitation of Liberia's hinterland and its various resources. Until October 1992 Taylor was able to export timber and other commodities with the help of multinational companies. In the case of Rwanda export commodities played an important role until the RPF incursion made overland transport hazardous and more costly. The Habyarimana regime began to embezzle externally generated funds such as development aid to maintain its patronage network. The continuing struggle between the ousted extremist regime and the RPF was by and large funded through direct military and financial external assistance, either implicitly through humanitarian relief aimed at refugees in the Zairean camps or through regimes facilitating the shipment of French weapons to Hutu militias (*i.e.* Mobutu's Zaire and South Africa). On the other hand, once in control of vast areas in northern and southern Kivu, the RPA used local resources to fund its presence and military campaigns.

In the case of Sudan the most valuable natural resources cannot easily be extracted and commercialized (with the partial exception of oil). However, the vast relief effort - Operation Lifeline Sudan - served to prolong the conflict as scarce resources were made available to support the civilian constituency of a poorly organized rebel movement engaged in a struggle for survival. Simultaneously, the United States has provided generous resources to the SPLA, which has also enjoyed shelter and support in Uganda and Ethiopia.

In all cases actors and factions proliferated and deliberately targeted civilians. Militias were encouraged to disrupt civilian life with the aim of instigating a culture of violence and insecurity, and possibly of gaining a decisive victory over their opponents. Children and adolescents were regularly recruited or press-ganged as foot soldiers and, in the case of Liberia, forced to commit deeds of unimaginable cruelty in ritualized acts closely bound to the cultural identity of constituent ethnic groups. In their quest to achieve power, rival warlords and politicians mobilized disenfranchised youths and other population groups, but in the process (nearly) destroyed existing institutions and human resources, thus compromising the future of their countries and constituencies.

## 2 Other External Interventions

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### 2.1 Introductory Remarks

One can distinguish two types of external interventions in intrastate conflicts, namely: interventions by actors that are party to the conflict; and so-called ‘third-party’ interventions. The difference is essentially based on the intentions of the actors involved.

External actors that are party to an intrastate conflict will support a specific side and will engage in action that is meant to further the objectives and interests of favoured domestic parties. This will involve all kinds of activities that are not necessarily undertaken to mediate a settlement *irrespective* of which domestic party will emerge victorious from such a negotiated outcome. On the contrary, more often than not such action will prop up specific domestic actors, help to fuel the conflict, intensify its dynamics and prolong hostilities. The respective case studies and the previous chapter of this synthesis report provide numerous examples of such partisan actors. For example, the role of France in Rwanda; the involvement of various regional powers such as Uganda, Burundi and Zaire in the Rwandan conflict; the complicity of Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast in the outbreak and vicissitudes of the Liberian civil war; and the posture of the United States *vis-à-vis* the Islamic regime of Sudan, all bear witness to the intensifying and complicating effects of such external intervention.

Such involvement needs to be distinguished from third-party intervention, which may take place in either multilateral cadres or through bilateral forms of interaction. Third-party intervention, while not necessarily completely neutral towards all the domestic conflict parties involved, is characterized by a desire to realize a peaceful settlement no matter which domestic party will gain the upper hand through such a negotiated deal. For the purpose of the Conflict Policy Research Project, this chapter focuses on this type of intervention. Firstly, it discusses the third-party interventions that took place in multilateral frameworks and, secondly, those undertaken by individual external actors on a bilateral basis.

### 2.2 Multilateral Interventions

As the respective case studies point out, some of the interventions undertaken in the context of African regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) hardly amounted to impartial involvement aimed at reaching a more or less disinterested peace settlement. The conclusions on this point in the respective case studies clearly call for some comments, especially as Western policy on Third World conflicts is at present grafted on the involvement of regional frameworks. The discussion



below of interventions through African regional and continental cadres is followed by some remarks on the activities undertaken in the context of the United Nations in the countries engaged in conflict.

### *Regional Cadres*

The intervention in Liberia by ECOMOG, the Nigeria-led force deployed officially under the auspices of ECOWAS, constitutes the most graphic example of political and military activity purportedly undertaken to mediate a peaceful settlement but constituting, in actual fact, an instrument through which certain external actors could pursue a conflict of regional dimensions in the context of an intrastate theatre. While humanitarian considerations may have played a role in whether to intervene and rescue Liberians and one's own citizens trapped in the fighting, the decision to intervene was principally related to concerns over the nature of Taylor's rebellion. As shown in the previous chapter, the NPFL consisted of disaffected youngsters from Liberia and across the region, who were inclined to pursue their social mobility by violent means and were thus perceived as a potential threat to many of the region's incumbent elites. Coupled to the alliances that Taylor had forged with some of Nigeria's rivals for regional leadership, as well as the personal and business interests that the Nigerian government had in Samuel Doe, Liberia's embattled President, this was sufficient reason for the Nigerians to intervene. The rationale for intervention, moreover, was not so much to strive for a peaceful settlement no matter who would benefit from such a deal, as to come to the aid of Doe and, when it was clear he was beyond rescue, to stop Taylor in his tracks.

With Nigeria dominating ECOMOG in men and money, the intervention force was seriously lacking in neutrality. Its partisan, anti-Taylor objective became clear almost immediately, when the ill-prepared force accepted help from Liberian factions that were engaging the NPFL. This was the start of a series of battles with Taylor's men, in which ECOMOG went so far as to arm rival factions, to support the establishment of new factions that took on the NPFL, to encourage splits in existing factions and even to participate, at contingent level, in Liberia's expanding war economy. The upshot of these actions was that ECOMOG helped to prolong rather than shorten the war. Having few illusions about ECOMOG's record, the American administration therefore kept its support to the intervention deliberately low-key. Occasionally, it explicitly criticized the force's partisan behaviour. In an attempt to affect the practice of ECOMOG intervention, the international community even decided to dispatch a United Nations Observer Mission to Liberia (UNOMIL) to act as a watchdog for ECOMOG and placate Taylor.

Conversely, when the Nigerians concluded that they would not be able to rid Liberia of Taylor, ECOMOG began to accommodate his interests. Thus, while the intervention had started in a partisan way, it also ended as such. In fact, its prime mover, Nigeria, had never conceived of ECOMOG as a neutral third-party intervener. Implementation of the peace accord therefore amounted to a veritable exit strategy without the guarantee of a stable peace: it involved acquiescence in the militarization of the capital; ECOMOG support to the NPFL and ULIMO-K during some of the worst fighting (April 1996); West African assistance in the distribution of Liberia's political spoils among the fighting factions; and a half-hearted process of disarmament and demobilization. Elections were rushed through, as ECOMOG did not want to prolong its presence in Liberia and the NPFL leader opposed a more reasonable, extended timetable. The tight electoral schedule was clearly to the advantage of Taylor, whose party enjoyed far better funding and organization. ECOMOG clearly showed it would not feel uncomfortable with a Taylor victory and left legally stipulated limits on campaign spending unenforced. The massive vote in Taylor's favour has to be set against the constricted nature of the choice on offer to the Liberian electorate and the difficult context in which it had to make up its mind.

IGAD's involvement in the Sudanese civil war also has to be interpreted in the context of regional politics. For many decades, relations in the Horn of Africa have been marked by conflict and tension, manifested in complex and shifting alliances between governments and rebel movements, subversive support to insurrections in neighbouring countries, and temporary truces. Thus, Uganda, Ethiopia and, until recently, Eritrea have been opposed to the present government of Sudan and have supported, in one form or another, some of the various rebel and opposition groups fighting the GoS in Khartoum. In this context Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea initiated an IGAD mediation initiative that was purported to show their commitment to a peaceful settlement but was driven by a poorly concealed desire to put pressure on the Khartoum regime and support the SPLA and other rebel groups on the battlefield, as well as at the negotiating table.

Hence, the so-called Declaration of Principles hammered out as the framework of negotiations in 1994 suited the objectives of the rebel groups very well. It should be interpreted as evidence of the degree to which the GoS had temporarily succumbed to internal and regional pressures, rather than of its commitment to the far-reaching consequences of the Declaration's contents. Thus, while paying lip-service to the territorial unity of the country, the Declaration stipulated the right of self-determination of the people of south Sudan; emphasized the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of the country and the separation of religion and state; and spoke of 'extensive rights of self-administration on the basis of federation, autonomy, etc.' for Sudan's various peoples. In the absence of agreement on these principles the Declaration even went so far as to stipulate that people would have the option to 'determine their future including independence'.

It would be difficult to see how the GoS, or indeed *any* government, could ever voluntarily concede to such an accord. Based as it was on the interests of a narrowly constituted group defined by an aggressive and expansive conception of Islam, the Sudanese government's full acceptance of the Declaration would have entailed its political suicide.

This appears to be exactly what inspired support for the IGAD initiative by the United States, which, at any rate, hoped to weaken and topple the Sudanese regime. Legitimized by the post-Cold War motto of 'African solutions to African problems', support to IGAD was low cost and low profile and thus politically harmless if the initiative came to naught. Partly in view of the less-than-genuine nature of IGAD's mediation effort, this is precisely what happened. Against the background of the vicissitudes on the battlefield, the IGAD mediation efforts time and again reached deadlock over the issues of separation between religion and state and the principle of self-determination for the south. Even when agreement was reached on self-determination, disputes over its territorial application re-established the impasse. Positions on the separation of religion and state remained firmly irreconcilable.

Although one could argue that, for peace to stand a chance, one or other party to the conflict would have to give up its most radical objectives, the lack of sincerity on the part of IGAD countries and their Western backers was hardly helpful in gaining the minimum of trust required from all sides, nor, indeed, for setting them on a fruitful course of negotiations. Responsibility for the ensuing deadlock thus has to be shared by the various Sudanese parties, as well as the external - regional and Western - actors.

The regional context to the Rwandan conflict, finally, was mainly marked by the *absence* of an appropriate cadre through which third-party mediation efforts could be pursued. While this prevented manipulation of multilateral intervention efforts for objectives other than the restoration of peace, the lack of regional institutions also meant, paradoxically, that there were few inhibitions against partisan

meddling. Thus, of the three African intrastate conflicts analysed in the project, the Rwandan case stands out not only for the massive numbers of victims, but also for the total escalation and regionalization of the war, up to the point that the Central African crisis involved some twenty odd states on the continent.

### *The Continental Cadre*

Neither in Rwanda nor Sudan nor Liberia did the Organization of African Unity (OAU) manage to contribute decisively to settlement. Traditionally, it has been by and large absent from multilateral attempts to find a solution for the civil war in Sudan. In Liberia, it played only a secondary role. When civil war broke out, the organization was only just beginning the slow process of revising its official posture on intrastate conflicts. It therefore encouraged intervention by Nigeria and the framework of ECOWAS rather than its own. In the process, it largely limited itself to facilitating the efforts of ECOMOG and thus most of the time went along with the policies pursued by others. Perhaps only in Rwanda did the OAU manage to generate a serious effort by undertaking the first multilateral intervention in the country's conflict. However, the limited size of the OAU's observer force was insufficient for maintaining the ceasefire for very long. While it had been intended as an initial phase of a larger-scale intervention planned for a later stage, the escalation of hostilities made this impossible, as did French insistence that the UN take responsibility for such an eventuality.

### *United Nations Involvement*

With the end of the Cold War the UN appeared to be finally freed from the stranglehold in which East-West confrontation had held it. However, its enhanced posture and activity in peace-keeping and humanitarian interventions received a painful blow with the debacle in Somalia. Western countries, especially the United States, became more hesitant about intervening in Africa's intrastate conflicts and this considerably affected the UN's performance, most notably in Rwanda.

The United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR) established in 1993 involved some 2,500 men, who were poorly equipped and hardly in the position to halt escalation of hostilities between the RPF and the extremist Hutu government, or prevent the execution of the genocide. UNAMIR's mandate limited the use of violence to the purpose of self-defence, as the Security Council, even in the face of mass killings, refused to broaden its scope in the direction of Chapter VII of the UN Charter. With the United States opposed to the dispatch of additional troops and supplies, the Security Council instead decided, two weeks into the genocide, that UNAMIR be reduced to a token presence of 270 men. The UN representative was to continue his mediation efforts in the conflict, which Western countries did not portray as a deliberately planned and carefully executed genocide but as an anarchic situation in which third-party intervention could not succeed. It was only a month or so later that the Security Council agreed to expand UNAMIR to over 5,000 men, who were ordered to contribute to the security and protection of displaced people, refugees and civilians at risk, including by establishing secure humanitarian areas. Implementation of this resolution was, however, delayed as a result of haggling over troops, funds and equipment.

By the time that UNAMIR II troops arrived in Rwanda, an estimated 800,000 people were dead and the genocidal regime had been defeated, with its remnants chased into Zaire by the RPF. What was left for the UN was to establish an international court to try the organizers and executors of the killings. By 1996 its presence was reduced and its role was limited to monitoring and facilitating the return of Hutu refugees from neighbouring countries. UNAMIR II left the country when the new Rwandan government refused to prolong its presence. The UN's purely humanitarian work was,

however, more significant, with considerable funds and energy spent on establishing and provisioning Hutu refugee camps in neighbouring countries, especially Zaire. Yet an unintended side effect was that the UN thereby helped to supply and reinforce a rump genocidal regime, whose extremist remnants were in control of the camps - a situation that ended with the RPF-backed overthrow of Mobutu.

Such unintended political consequences also bedevilled UN involvement in Sudan. For two decades UN agencies have been running relief campaigns to supply starving civilians with basic commodities to survive the effects of war and drought. In 1989 this was formalized in a tripartite agreement with the GoS and rebel groups - Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) - which allowed relief agencies free access to the zones controlled by each side. While taking a neutral stand on the conflict, the OLS was perceived, by the United Nations at least, as a strictly technical exercise with a humanitarian objective. Nevertheless, in zones controlled by the Sudanese government, NGOs have regularly been expelled and relief flights banned. More generally, in GoS areas a degree of control was exercised over humanitarian operations that managed to subject the OLS to the political priorities of the government in Khartoum. In the south, too, the UN's humanitarian operations have suffered from interference by rebel factions, which see aid flows primarily as valuable resources that can ease problems of troop supplies. Relief supplies have frequently been sold, stolen or used for military objectives, thus sustaining the rebel war effort. Moreover, humanitarian relief has played its role in the proliferation of factions, with each trying to gain control of valuable external supplies.

In Liberia the UN's performance was not only limited to humanitarian relief, although its political role was largely secondary if not passive. Thus in 1990 the Security Council refused to become mired with the Liberian problem, in part because of opposition from Ivory Coast and the two African Council members, Zaire and Ethiopia. In the course of the conflict it responded sceptically from time to time to the actions taken by ECOMOG, but it never took an explicit line on the latter's (mis)appropriation of enforcement powers. A more active period came, however, in 1993. In view of ECOMOG's inability to coerce Taylor into submission and end the conflict, Benin began to work for more involvement by the United Nations. With Nigeria temporarily distracted by a domestic political crisis, the UN managed to get the Liberian parties around the negotiating table for an agreement that marked the establishment of UNOMIL. Yet, although it was supposed to guard over ECOMOG's neutrality, UNOMIL never developed into more than a token force. Its men were unable to put an effective check on ECOMOG, on which UNOMIL was wholly dependent. Since UNOMIL did not formulate any initiatives independent of ECOMOG, the UN's political interventions remained reactive in nature.

A similar conclusion could be drawn for the UN's participation in the organization and observance of the 1997 elections, although its contribution here was of some importance. It was UNOMIL's job to certify together with ECOWAS whether or not the elections in Liberia had been free and fair. To this purpose, it had military as well as civilian observers located in field stations, in addition to 200 civilian observers deployed on polling day. UNOMIL observers checked on the correct registration of voters whilst their communication and transport facilities also became important resources for information and logistics. ECOWAS, however, insisted on leading the elections itself as Nigeria feared that the West might try and take the credit or, possibly, because strong external participation might become an obstacle for ECOMOG's final withdrawal. The UN's position thus remained firmly subservient to the parameters set by the Nigerians.

### 2.3 Bilateral Interventions

Truly third-party bilateral interventions were few and far between - something that reflects one of the most fundamental problems of Western conflict policy *vis-à-vis* Africa since the end of the Cold War. In Sudan, several Western as well as African governments intervened of their own accord, but this never remotely approached a third-party effort geared at realizing a more or less disinterested, impartial peace settlement. The United States, France, the Soviet Union/Russian Federation, China, Middle and Far Eastern powers, as well as a host of African regimes, have at one time or another delivered arms, money and other military equipment to one of the sides in the conflict. Bilateral third-party mediation efforts were conspicuously absent, while this lacuna was hardly compensated for by the partisan inspiration underlying the diplomatic *démarches* undertaken in the framework of IGAD. The reticence to intervene and mediate on a bilateral basis similarly had the most damaging consequences in Liberia and, especially, Rwanda.

In 1990 the United States, as the former colonial power, declined to intervene in Liberia beyond the evacuation of its own citizens. With the end of the Cold War Liberia had lost its strategic significance in the eyes of the Americans. Moreover, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait took place at the same time as the first salient development in the Liberian conflict (August 1990, when the fighting got bogged down around Executive Mansion and other areas of the Capital), thus focusing Western attention on the Middle East. Instead, the United States encouraged the Nigerians to take the lead, thereby giving ample opportunity to the West African opponents of Taylor to intervene, with their own specific objectives, in the Liberian conflict. Beyond this, American concern with Liberia was limited to some mediatory activities of former President Carter, financial-material support to ECOMOG and, in a later phase of the conflict, to facilitating Nigeria's rapprochement with Taylor. As noted above, the United States had few illusions about ECOMOG, which was at times openly criticized, including by members of the administration, for its partisan conduct. US assistance to the intervention force thus only involved non-lethal equipment that does not seem to have had much effect on the course of hostilities. Apart from this, the US provided humanitarian aid on a massive scale and election assistance during the final stages of the conflict.

American policy towards Liberia was thus reactive in nature, leaving the initiative largely to West African actors. ECOMOG was also not sufficiently seen as a problem in the formulation and execution of US policy. Assistance to the force was therefore half-hearted, while at times contradictory action was taken, such as in April 1996 when the Americans began arming fighters of ULIMO-J to help them withstand an ECOMOG-backed attack by the NPFL and ULIMO-K. The US factor was hence not crucial to the course of the conflict. Set against the background of what the Americans could theoretically provide in terms of resources and capabilities, aid was piecemeal and marginal. Liberia was not a US priority.

American interests in Rwanda were even more marginal, especially after the reformulation of US Africa policy that took place in the wake of the disastrous intervention in Somalia. Traditionally, American interests on the continent had been very limited, with economic investments restricted to a few key trading partners and strategic interests handled, during the Cold War era, by its European allies. Moreover, after Somalia, policy was marked by a desire to keep costs at a minimum and avoid entanglements that could create domestic political repercussions. American officials were therefore instructed to oppose the dispatch of additional troops to Rwanda, helped to delay implementation of the Security Council's decision on UNAMIR II, and carefully avoided the word genocide when discussing the Rwandan catastrophe. The administration's posture on Rwanda was negatively affected

by its assessment that the African-American community in the United States did not attribute great importance to a decisive American stand. Events in the former Yugoslavia, moreover, diverted American attention from the crisis in Central Africa. Much later, Rwandans had to content themselves with a public apology by the US President that the Western world had made a mistake.

That qualification was also painfully valid for the conduct of the Belgian government, which rapidly withdrew its contingent from UNAMIR when ten of its men were killed by Hutu extremists in the early stages of the genocide. The Belgian contingent to UNAMIR was the most battle-hardened and its withdrawal therefore constituted a serious weakening of the UNAMIR presence. Moreover, the Belgians urged other countries to follow their example and gave far more priority to evacuating foreign nationals than to protecting the Tutsi and moderate Hutu population against the genocidal militias. More generally, as the former colonial power the Belgians had already steadily diminished their presence in Rwanda with the onset of civil war in 1990 - its place taken over by the French government, which had thrown its full weight behind the Habyarimana regime. Belgian conduct, however, cannot be equated with the degree of French complicity in the run-up to events leading to the genocide and its aftermath, *i.e.* the various forms of armed assistance, including military training, that Paris provided to the forces of the Habyarimana regime up to the outbreak of genocide, as well as protection afforded to the latter's retreating remnants in the course of Opération Turquoise. The Belgians also managed to restore an important donor presence in the country after the slaughter.

## 3 Dutch Interventions

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### 3.1 Political Interventions

#### *Introduction*

Outside the European heartland, the transatlantic realm and perhaps the field of multilateralism, the Netherlands used to behave by and large as a neutral observer of important political developments. This also applies to violent intrastate conflicts in the Third World. Sub-Saharan Africa, despite professed interest on the part of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has remained a rather peripheral area of interest, partly because Dutch trade relations with the region are negligible. Yet during Minister Pronk's period in office as Minister of Development Cooperation, the Directorate General of International Cooperation became the leading Dutch policy agency on sub-Saharan Africa. In contrast with the prevailing Dutch attitude towards the African continent, Minister Pronk initiated specific policies towards a number of countries involved in internal conflicts. These policies were based on a notion that humanitarian relief alone did not suffice and that additional aid was needed to intervene in these conflicts. This involved support for actors that were ready and willing to contribute to peaceful and durable settlements. This chapter reviews a number of political interventions aimed at conflict resolution (in Liberia and Sudan) or post-war rehabilitation (in Rwanda). Secondly, the humanitarian efforts by the Netherlands are discussed. Thirdly, post-conflict interventions are highlighted in the case of Rwanda and Liberia.

Despite professed engagement, it can be concluded that the Netherlands did not intervene directly, either politically or militarily, in the conflicts that erupted in Liberia, Rwanda and Sudan. When Minister Pronk landed in Kigali during the heyday of the Rwandan genocide, his mandate was to assess humanitarian relief requirements. Although he was extensively briefed on the unfolding genocide, he did not intervene diplomatically or otherwise, nor did his findings provide input for decision-making in the Netherlands upon his return. In Liberia, the Netherlands intervened at a relatively late stage of the conflict, mainly supporting the multilateral ECOMOG intervention and, later, its exit strategy. In Sudan, the Dutch provided financial support to the IGAD initiative, which resulting in a long and fruitless process of negotiations. During a number of years the Dutch government even chaired the 'Friends of IGAD' (FoI), a Western donor-support group. All these activities followed the political parameters and choices established by other (Western and African) actors, in the form of humanitarian aid in the case of Rwanda, 'peace-building' in the Sudan or 'peace enforcement' in Liberia.

*Rwanda*

In Rwanda, the international community was unwilling to intervene and stop the slaughter in view of the previous debacle in Somalia and the murder of several Belgian UNAMIR peace-keepers during the early days of the genocide. The fear of yet another quagmire and a gloomy vision of large numbers of international peace-keepers bogged down in a bloody 'ethnic war' did not inspire Western politicians to an adequate and timely response. Also the Netherlands never considered a bilateral military or political initiative to halt the conflict and the genocide. As mentioned above, Minister Pronk's May 1994 mission to Kigali had a humanitarian purpose.

Yet, one could wonder how this visit could only be portrayed as humanitarian and by consequence non-political. The absence of a strongly worded statement by Pronk on the unfolding slaughter made the Dutch visit politically and ethically questionable, especially as data on the genocide taking place must have reached members of the Dutch delegation. However, upon his return (and to his credit) Minister Pronk tried to persuade members of the UN Security Council to implement the renewed mandate for a UNAMIR II mission in order to save lives, but did not succeed. Furthermore, the Netherlands was highly critical of belated EU involvement. It was only when the full impact of the ensuing refugee crisis was adequately diffused to the general public that Western donors became eager to demonstrate their willingness to address the humanitarian emergency. The Netherlands was among the first to provide generous contributions to this operation. The Dutch Parliament was positive in its assessment of Dutch responses to the Rwandan crisis, but Minister Pronk expressed criticism about the inability of the donor community, including the Netherlands, to intervene promptly and effectively. In fact, Pronk stated that the international donor community had lost its credibility.

In the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, a regional security crisis emerged, partly as a by-product of the unwillingness of the international community to make a political assessment of the humanitarian aid operation. No effort was made to prevent the Hutu extremists from attacking Rwanda from within the refugee camps. Simultaneously, throughout the refugee crisis the incumbent Rwandan regime faced the effects of an arms embargo originally intended to halt the previous genocidal regime, whereas Zaire generously provided logistical and military support to the extremist movement, not in the least hindered by external pressure. As a result, the international community helped to prop up the extremist movement and indirectly weakened the incumbent regime in Kigali. The half-hearted condemnation of RPA support to the military intervention of the AFDL in eastern Zaire (August 1996) clearly demonstrated this ambiguity and the differences between individual donors with regard to the Rwandan crisis.

Meanwhile, the Netherlands took a leading role in supporting the incumbent government of Rwanda and continued to do so throughout the post-genocidal period. Dutch financial support was substantial and helped to legitimize the RPF's rise to power. The ruthless eviction of internally displaced people from a number of camps such as Kibeho triggered Dutch discontent, but criticism evaporated quickly after government inquiries more or less absolved the RPA from alleged involvement in the crimes committed.

Yet, despite active Dutch support, the Netherlands was unable to exercise significant influence on the Rwandan government's policies, even if these were counterproductive in promoting post-war rehabilitation. In the end, the arrogance and high-handed attitude of the Rwandan regime frustrated the 'Friends of Rwanda', a group of Western donor countries among whom the Netherlands stood out prominently. However, the overriding importance of the internal security setting, recognized as a



genuine concern by the Netherlands, cast a prohibitive shadow over all donor policies concerning Rwanda. It was only at the end of 1998, when the internal security situation had noticeably improved, that an opportunity arose for a more critical approach. For example, the use of donor conditions to enforce Rwandan compliance with specific policy directives led to a Memorandum of Understanding between the Rwandan government and the United Kingdom. The Netherlands tended to favour a similar approach for future Dutch support.

### *Sudan*

Dutch involvement in Sudan was important in the period 1975-1989 but underwent substantial change with the military *coup* in 1989, which marked the rise to power of the NIF. The case study concluded that the Netherlands largely followed US policy on Sudan, which was strongly affected if not dictated by an anti-NIF stance. After the Bashir *coup*, Dutch aid was phased out (1989-1994) and only with the advent of the IGAD initiative in 1994 did the Dutch presence resurface. The Netherlands' professed neutrality with regard to the major actors had earned it an important role as facilitator of the IGAD initiative. The Netherlands continued to provide aid to the GoS for a longer period than other Western donors, while criticizing human rights abuses committed in the war waged by the GoS against the south. The Dutch consistently played a pre-eminent financial role with regard to facilitating IGAD-initiated negotiations.

However, as the IGAD initiative was led by a coalition of countries that had opposed the NIF regime from the start, the Netherlands' support to IGAD cannot be seen as an impartial form of intervention. In fact, the Friends of IGAD initiative chaired by the Netherlands perfectly suited American policy towards Sudan. Consequently, the international donor community presented IGAD as an excellent regional forum and a reliable local structure that could address the political problems of the region.

In time, however, the Dutch developed a more realistic attitude towards the belligerent parties and the dynamics of the IGAD initiative. The Dutch government confronted US policy on Sudan because it realized that strict neutrality of all donors was a necessary prerequisite for successful negotiations. The US-driven donor scheme called 'The Clinton Initiative', which professed to work for security and peace in the Horn of Africa, thus became a bone of contention between the Netherlands and the Americans. This initiative was clearly beneficial to the opponents of the GoS in the sub-region, frustrated the IGAD talks and alienated the Sudanese regime. In contrast, the Dutch government attempted to broker a settlement by inviting the warring parties to a conference in The Hague (October 1996), but these talks came to naught.

The Netherlands also became increasingly sceptical about the prospects of a comprehensive peace under the current Sudanese regime. The United States, meanwhile, provided so-called 'defensive, non-lethal and limited aid' to Ethiopia and Eritrea, which benefited the rebel movement in southern Sudan. In May 1998, however, negotiations reached deadlock again, as war erupted between Ethiopia and Eritrea, making the prospects for peace even dimmer. The Netherlands changed its objectives (centred on peace in a united Sudan) and now favoured a more realistic option, *i.e.* any solution that would help to end the war, including southern independence. Although the Netherlands threatened to end humanitarian relief in an effort to press the belligerents into finding a solution, it continued to provide humanitarian aid. However, under the new Minister for Development Cooperation, the Dutch government gradually withdrew from the key positions in the FoI and the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF), ceding its co-chairmanship to Norway. Frustration about the lack of

progress on the political level resulted in Dutch withdrawal, although publicly Dutch priorities *vis-à-vis* Sudan remained the same. Years of political lobbying did not yield significant results.

### *Liberia*

In Liberia, yet another scenario emerged from a limited pre-conflict involvement to active Dutch support of, what in practice amounted to, partisan meddling in the conflict. As early as 1991, the Dutch government more or less welcomed the ECOMOG intervention, arguing that the presence of ECOMOG represented a stabilizing role in Liberia. Real Dutch political engagement only emerged in the wake of US initiatives to establish the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) in April 1996. Efforts to impose sanctions on the warlords failed to materialize because of disagreement between Western donors. A freeze on foreign assets, for instance, proved to be one bridge too far for many countries, including the Netherlands. In contrast, at the second ICGL meeting the Netherlands proposed to restructure the ECOMOG intervention force and add military advisors, which, however, were rejected. During the follow-up meeting in July 1996 in Brussels, the Netherlands emphasized continuing support for the restructuring and expansion of ECOMOG.

The donor community applauded ECOMOG's performance, in spite of the dubious role that some contingents had played in the Liberian capital in April 1996. Furthermore, Western countries urged ECOWAS to honour the agreements stipulated by the Abuja accord, such as demobilization and disarmament of the warring factions and the organization of elections. Threats were voiced against parties not willing to comply with this arrangement, albeit in rather vague terms. Minister Pronk pledged substantial financial support to assist in the implementation of the requirements for the Abuja agreement. To this effect, the Netherlands funded additional contingents from 'neutral' ECOWAS countries (Mali and Ghana) to assist with the disarmament and demobilization programme.

Taylor assumed power as Liberia's elected President in August 1997. In 1998 Minister Pronk visited Liberia to repeat the conditions under which aid would be continued, *i.e.* the installation of a broad and inclusive government, respect for human rights and good governance. The instability of Taylor's regime, however, proved a serious obstacle to the development of a normal aid relationship.

The Netherlands' Liberia policy contained some serious flaws. While being aware of the dubious aspects of ECOMOG's role in Liberia, the government nevertheless went along with its leadership in the search for a settlement. In this way, the Netherlands helped to set the stage for what was essentially an exit strategy. Moreover, in allowing ECOMOG rather than the United Nations to keep control over this process and in failing to press effectively for proper disarmament, demobilization and a reasonable electoral calendar, the international community - including the Netherlands - became associated with a settlement that did not involve a circumspect process culminating in a properly elected peace. International responsibility for Liberia was hence repudiated at the cost of the presidential elevation of a predator and, consequently, the production of an unstable security setting. In thus supporting ECOMOG and the parameters of settlement as set through ECOWAS, the Dutch government largely followed the United States, instead of formulating its own policy.

## **3.2 Humanitarian Interventions**

### *Introduction*

To some extent, humanitarian responses to major political crises are viewed as neutral interventions devoid of political meaning. This largely stems from the fact that such interventions are seen as

legitimate actions motivated by genuine concern about the well-being of civilian victims of political crises. Moreover, the Netherlands has tried to compensate somewhat for its status as a minor actor in international politics by way of supporting this type of intervention. Hence, political and humanitarian actions are viewed as different domains of intervention that can be implemented simultaneously, even if the activities involved might produce contradictory outcomes.

### *Rwanda*

In the case of Rwanda, the successful obfuscation of the genocide during its heyday initially produced donor confusion. Furthermore, the ongoing fighting between the FAR and the RPF prevented effective humanitarian assistance to genocide victims. A 'first needs' assessment could only take place once the genocide had already been executed and the RPF had taken control of most Rwandan territory. As a result of the massive flight of refugees and a lack of international recognition for the incumbent RPF regime, the humanitarian crisis inside Rwanda itself, for the time being, received only scant attention. In contrast, the Hutu refugee population gathering in the huge refugee camps in eastern Zaire, Burundi and western Tanzania, became the focal point of attention for the international donor community, setting the stage for the largest humanitarian relief operation ever undertaken. In Zaire alone, the cost of the operation was estimated at one million dollars a day. Between August 1994 and August 1996, this operation consumed two-thirds of all bilateral and multilateral aid allegedly disbursed to Rwanda.

The Netherlands provided some 50 million guilders of humanitarian relief in 1994 alone. However, the existence of the extremist movement in the refugee camps provoked intensive and long discussions in the Dutch Parliament about the possible impact that withholding aid might have on the refugees. Ultimately, it was decided not to use humanitarian aid as a political instrument to put pressure on the Hutu extremists, as it was feared that innocent civilians would bear the brunt of the impact.

None of the major donors was willing to withhold support, something that led in practice to the perpetuation of the refugee crisis in the Great Lakes region. However, the relief organizations, with the exception of some smaller NGOs, did not (want to) realize the effects of their endeavours on the regional security setting. When the camps were forcefully evacuated as a result of the joint operations of the AFDL/RPA, the humanitarian intervention came to an abrupt halt. During the ensuing crisis, aid agencies desperately tried to procure food and shelter for the fleeing Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire, but these efforts failed in the turmoil of the extremist retreat and the successive rounds of fighting that took place. The bulk of the refugees returned to Rwanda, where relief organizations had better access to them. The mass return and resettlement attracted much attention and, again, consumed the bulk of the relief budgets. Hence, the relief interventions followed the momentum of the refugee movements, at best supported the suffering population groups, but in the process helped to prolong the political crisis. In eastern Zaire, for example, humanitarian interventions contributed to the destabilization of the regional security setting.

The Netherlands decided in the end that the objective of providing aid to victims of war must prevail over political considerations. This inadvertently contributed to the deterioration of regional security and facilitated hard-line Hutu extremists to engage in guerrilla war inside Rwanda, turning donors into reluctant accomplices.

### *Sudan*

In Sudan, the massive Operation Lifeline Sudan was initiated during the famine of 1983-1985, when the UN and GoS decided to collaborate in the provision of food to the affected populations. In 1989

the OLS structure was formalized on the principle of an agreement between the warring factions that aid be delivered to all war victims in the respective territories under supervision of the UN. In practice, however, the OLS became a source of additional income and an instrument for the diffusion of political and religious propaganda by the various warring factions. The GoS thus used OLS to spread Islam among various groups in the north, while the SPLA regarded the programme as an important material resource and used the aid involved to provide for its warriors.

The Netherlands was one of the initiators of the OLS structure. OLS became the prime channel for the distribution of Dutch aid to Sudan, after bilateral aid had been phased out due to the 1989 *coup*. At first, the Dutch government believed that OLS would contribute to the establishment of peace, but this hope soon disappeared in view of the manipulation of OLS resources by the warring parties. The purely humanitarian objective of providing food to the needy population became of paramount importance. In 1996 the International Advisory Committee (IAC) on OLS was established, after a critical report had listed its shortcomings. Until 1996, Dutch support to OLS was unconditional but this changed after the installation of the IAC. Henceforth, criticism was voiced about the lack of coordination between the northern and southern sectors of OLS, its role in supporting warring factions and the lack of the GoS's commitment to the provision of humanitarian assistance to the south. In 1999, the Dutch government supported a proposal to end cooperation with the SPLA's 'humanitarian' wing, if it did not account for the funds that it received and did not become more independent from the SPLA proper. Nevertheless, the Dutch position continued to be ambiguous. While having serious doubts about the effectiveness of the operation and its sustaining effect on the war, the Netherlands did not adjust its policy.

### *Liberia*

The Netherlands also provided humanitarian aid to the victims of the Liberian conflict. Over half of all project activities can be classified in this category. After the Abuja accord and the subsiding of hostilities, these activities diminished. As was the case in southern Sudan, the aid endeavour was exploited by the various armed factions. Aid agencies resources were extracted in several ways, either by demanding payment for access to faction-held territories or by demanding transmission of project equipment upon completion of a project. Furthermore, extensive rounds of looting in Monrovia emptied the offices of relief agencies. Other practices involved the payment of security guards and taxes at checkpoints. Nevertheless, against the background of Liberia's well-developed war economy, these resources (Dutch and other) can only have been an additional, if sometimes very helpful, input for the warring factions.

## **3.3 Post-conflict Interventions**

It is difficult to give a precise definition of what constitute post-conflict interventions. Yet if the moment of intervention is taken as a point of reference, a whole range of activities can be labelled as such. If an internal conflict has subsided or if a peaceful settlement has been reached, more or less all interventions aimed at restoring civilian life and repairing social and governmental infrastructure can be said to represent post-conflict interventions.

In Sudan, the protracted nature of the hostilities and the continuing failure to reach a negotiated settlement have made post-war rehabilitation illusory. In Liberia, the electoral victory of Taylor did not automatically lead to the return of donor support because Taylor did not inspire confidence and Western governments had doubts about the political stability of his regime. Harassment and

persecution of opposition leaders, former warlords and civilian activists made them cautious about the disbursement of funds for rehabilitation work. However, during the course of the conflict, some donors had already started funding some projects aimed at rehabilitation in specific areas or among specific groups. Thus, the Netherlands provided funds for some activities aimed at rehabilitation and reconstruction before April 1996. The political and military situation at the time, however, was highly unstable, as the first Abuja accord had begun to marginalize the position of one of Liberia's factions - ULIMO-J - something that became clear in various rounds of fighting (December 1995 and April 1996). Hence, the Dutch decision to disburse funds for rehabilitation and reconstruction work was based on an incorrect assessment of the politico-military context obtained at the time. The particular projects involved can therefore be deemed untimely.

Dutch post-war interventions in Rwanda were numerous and ranged from integrated regional projects and decentralization of governance to the training of rural policemen and the construction of their homes. Furthermore, sectoral aid was given to the Rwandan Justice Department and the Ministry of Education. All these activities were funded from a budget line for humanitarian aid that was directly supervised by Minister Pronk. Rwanda became a pilot model for an experiment with relatively new instruments of development cooperation, which focused on the process of post-war rehabilitation. Rwanda was devastated after the genocide and the war between the FAR and the RPF and needed all the external resources it could attract. The Netherlands quickly seized the opportunity to offer support. In the post-genocide period it became one of the leading donor countries. Pronk's policy focused on two major areas of intervention: resettlement and reintegration of refugees and the build-up of the justice sector in order to combat impunity; and restoring the rule of law and building a credible and impartial police force. The Netherlands provided generous funds to the Rwandan government for the realization of these objectives.

However, while these funds clearly facilitated the post-war rehabilitation process, the Netherlands had virtually no grip on the direction and the outcome of the projects involved. Some of the programmes were quite successful, such as the police-training programme and some regional integrated rehabilitation projects, but the parameters set by the Rwandan government seriously affected the effectiveness and success of Dutch rehabilitation aid. In fact, the Rwandan perception of the internal and external security setting provided the background within which Dutch post-conflict interventions must be evaluated. For instance, when the internal security setting improved noticeably in early 1999 the Rwandan government implemented limited but structural reform in the security sector, allowing Dutch support for the *Gendarmerie nationale* to gain momentum. Eventually, the Netherlands became active in other sectors as well. Gradually, post-war rehabilitation gave way to an integrated bilateral development programme, which was financed through the emergency funding modalities. This anomaly has persisted until the present. Currently, a discussion has started as to whether Rwanda should acquire full status as a bilateral recipient of Dutch development aid.

## 4 Conclusions

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The African conflicts analysed for the Conflict Policy Research Project all had their origins in exclusionary policies on the part of narrowly defined elite groups. As a result of deteriorating macroeconomic conditions, the patronage systems on which their regimes were based were confronted with scarcity and crisis. Ultimately, this led to violent conflict and the overthrow of incumbents and the installation of rival elites whose regimes, however, were similarly grounded in the patronage, if not predatory conduct, of privileged minorities, as exemplified by Taylor in Liberia.

In this respect it is surprising that the politico-economic nature of these regimes seldom constituted the point of departure for Western policy towards these countries, the conflicts that the West was engaged in, or their potential solution. References to this were only implicit and general, such as in the lip-service paid to the importance of good governance, democracy and human rights for the generality of the Third World. Beyond this, what stands out most clearly is the degree of marginalization to which Liberia, Rwanda and Sudan had succumbed and the extent to which Western responses to their troubles were dictated by this marginalized context. The many words devoted to conflict prevention and humanitarian solidarity can hardly hide that Western policy is dictated by insufficient self-interest and, thus, relative indifference and overall absence of commitment to intervene and help solve some of Africa's many crises.

If intervention did take place, much of it was humanitarian in focus, which entails fewer risks politically speaking and may, in fact, signify a *lack* of commitment to genuine resolution of conflicts.<sup>4</sup> Humanitarian intervention could usually not make a difference with regard to the conflict as such, even if it meant (temporary) relief for the civilian population. On the contrary, in the absence of efforts to tackle these situations, humanitarian aid on a number of occasions helped to fuel hostilities and related economies of war, thus prolonging the conflict. This proved particularly serious in Sudan and, especially, in the aftermath of the Rwandan conflagration. One can, therefore, safely conclude that the provision of humanitarian aid without political succour is likely to reinforce the dynamics of conflicts, generate new ones and complicate their eventual settlement.

Furthermore, the very distinction between humanitarian and political intervention can be called into question when set against the background of the abuse of relief aid by warring parties, its intensifying effects on hostilities and the lack of Western commitment to settle African conflicts - which is poorly concealed by the humanitarian nature of Western concern but is, itself, the consequence of a *political* stance. In the political practice of the 1990s the concept of humanitarian aid

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4) See also K. van Walraven (1999), *Conflict Policy in Some Western Countries: Some Explorative Notes* (The Hague: Clingendael Institute), p. 29, citing Norwegian sources on this point.

thus stands abused and can to some extent be interpreted as an insult to the peoples it was supposed to serve.

One could, of course, retort that political intervention proper did take place. However, the case studies showed that such 'intervention' was grafted on the professed Western objective of reinforcing the role of African international organizations in conflict mediation. Legitimized by the ideological banality of African solutions to African problems, this objective inserted an interface between the purported Western aim of contributing to the resolution of Africa's conflicts and its practice on the ground. The indirect nature of Western policy towards African troubles signified, similarly, a lack of Western commitment that ultimately elevated indifference to the status of foreign policy. Thus, where a regional security structure was lacking (*i.e.* Rwanda), the West failed to act at all. The support given to regional security organizations constituted a relatively cheap solution and provided an adequate excuse for external donors not to intervene directly. Institution-building thus became the professed aim of donor support, which actually amounted to and legitimized low-cost and low-profile involvement.

Unfortunately, this support was based on inadequate analysis. Rather than viewing these regional structures as institutions - which like Africa's post-colonial states are subject to paradigms that are ingrained in the nature of African politics and diverge from Western political rules - Western policy towards IGAD, ECOWAS and ECOMOG was merely grounded on the superficial likeness with the externalities of Western international institutions and their attendant instruments of intervention. This perspective failed to see that Africa's international organizations, too, are often conditioned by the politics of personal patronage. Western arguments about the better understanding that Africans have of African conditions can hardly outweigh the sharp contradictions of interests that often determine African responses to some of the continent's conflicts. Hence, in the cases in question - *i.e.* Liberia and Sudan - the posture of regional structures towards the conflicts and their potential settlement was less than genuine, if not seriously impaired by partisan considerations and lack of neutrality. In view of Western backing to IGAD and ECOMOG, responsibility for these protracted conflicts must therefore be shared by both Western and African parties alike. Instead of showing the political courage to create a problem about the role of Africa's regional institutions and question post-Cold War wisdom, the West has so far exhibited passivity in both analysis and action.

This is in part legitimized by reference to the United Nations, whose failures in Africa, it is argued, have seriously undermined it as a credible framework for intervention. Yet, if it is agreed that Africa is part of the world system and the UN is the world body that caters for international peace and security, then it should be involved in African conflicts and settlements as regularly as it is elsewhere. Mistakes and failures should serve as lessons for, and not as deterrence from, future engagement. Fear of UN quagmires conceals the deeper problem, namely that of Africa's marginal position in Western assessments about the global order.

The UNAMSIL operation in Sierra Leone thus constitutes, in this respect, an interesting shift in policy, not just by its very deployment but also by the fact that the difficulties that it has so far encountered have not led to its withdrawal. Led by the United Kingdom, which has troops in Sierra Leone (albeit outside the framework of UNAMSIL), the international community has until now shown a commitment to persist in its presence, despite the collapse of the Lomé peace accord that had brought UNAMSIL to the country in the first place. The UNMEE troops, soon to be employed in the border zone of Eritrea and Ethiopia, can be similarly interpreted as part of a possibly new trend of

United Nations interventions that diminish the dominant pattern of working through African regional frameworks.<sup>5</sup>

With regard to the conflicts discussed in this report, this was not the case. Moreover, the conflicts discussed also saw very little bilateral intervention by genuine third parties. If there was real involvement by external - Western as well as African - powers, much of it was insincere or motivated by selfish interests that helped to prop up particular parties to the conflict, in the process fuelling and prolonging hostilities. In this sense, there does not seem to be a fundamental distinction between the meddling in conflicts during the Cold War and the intervention practice of the 1990s. American policy towards Sudan is a good case in point of such destructive engagement and is only surpassed in consequences by France's complicity in the developments that took place in Rwanda.

It is deplorable that the Dutch government never dared to take the French to task for this. Their dubious role in the Rwandan conflict provoked surprisingly little protest inside the European Union. In this connection, it seems that the Dutch government never wanted to risk confrontation with major Western allies over conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, accepting their political spheres of influence as the point of departure for its policies. In general, the Netherlands followed the basic parameters of Western policy towards the countries in conflict and hence worked through the regional African security structures that, especially in the Liberian case, constituted the cornerstone of Western responses. Where and when possible, it sought to bolster the capacities of these regional organizations.

That the premises of these policies were based on flawed ideological assumptions did not matter much, as there was little proper analysis of how intervention through African regional institutions unfolded on the ground. While contrary signals disproving official analysis were received and the Dutch government was aware, for example, of ECOMOG's failings in Liberia, this knowledge was not acted upon, not only because it did not conform to preconceived ideas but probably also because it was not *understood*. Dutch conflict policy seems strongly affected by teleological and normative concepts that easily cloud one's understanding of the paradigms of African politics, its actors and institutions. More specifically, the government failed to gauge the different manifestations of the continent's marginalization and was consequently unaware of the implications that this should have for Western policy. Although Dutch conflict policy was informed by a sincere wish to contribute, on the other hand it seemed to have resulted in insufficient original, creative and critical thinking.

In contrast, there appeared to be a real belief that conflict policy through the above institutional parameters could actually work, a belief that was not shared by other Western powers such as the United States, which adopted a more cynical posture in regard to ECOMOG and IGAD. The Dutch attitude could thus be deemed naive. Moreover, in view of the outcome in Liberia it was also unrealistic, as the Western-backed ECOMOG settlement and Dutch support for it at best gave rise to a

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5) Significantly, a recent internal report of the Indian Force Commander of UNAMSIL that came into the possession of a journalist complains of systematic obstruction to UNAMSIL by former ECOMOG Nigerian troops. The report speaks of diamond smuggling by senior ECOMOG officers, their collaboration with the RUF to this purpose, and their possible connivance in efforts to sabotage the UNAMSIL operation by the RUF taking hostages. It indicates that both the RUF and Nigerian officers had expected that UNAMSIL would have become a Nigeria/ECOMOG-dominated and -led operation (possibly along the lines of UNOMIL in Liberia) and that, when this proved to be wrong, this caused the RUF to take up arms again in spring 2000; *Report on the Crisis of Sierra Leone*, no place or date, copy in possession of this report's authors.



fragile peace in a highly unstable security setting. The government is to be commended, however, that in the case of Sudan it ultimately dared to oppose the dubious policies pursued by the United States. With regard to Rwanda, Minister Pronk failed to take a strong political stance at the time when this was most urgently needed - during his visit to the country at the height of the genocide - but to his credit worked hard afterwards to dispatch UNAMIR II.

One other respect in which the Netherlands failed to distinguish itself positively from other Western governments was in the area of war and profit. As shown especially in Liberia, Western and African powers proved tardy and passive in imposing punitive measures against those who reaped benefit from the spilling of blood. During eight years of murder and abuse, Liberia's warlords were never seriously threatened with sanctions or judicial prosecution. Western and other foreign companies, too, were left completely free to engage in profitable deals with Liberia's violent entrepreneurs, skim some of the country's wealth and, consequently, reinforce the position of those who were prepared to destroy its people in their quest for power.

In this respect there seems to be a contradiction in Western attitudes. On the one hand, when evaluating their role in some of the world's crises, few actors and institutions are spared criticism. NGOs, governments, multilateral organizations and humanitarian agencies alike are regularly taken to task for their failures, omissions, self-interested meddling or well-intended but poorly conceived concern. Yet on the other hand individual entrepreneurs and companies have long been largely exempt from such scrutiny. In the age of privatization they have seldom been subjected to critical evaluation as to their role in conflicts. With the development of whole economies of war, this taboo is likely to lead to increasingly serious consequences. As noted in a recent report on Sierra Leone, this issue needs to be urgently addressed.<sup>6</sup> Fortunately, however, there are now some signs pointing to greater awareness about nefarious aspects to the roles played by private enterprise in countries in conflict. One can think here, for example, of the introduction by the UN of embargoes on the trade in diamonds from Angola and Sierra Leone, as well as the coining by the media and advocacy groups of the concept of 'blood diamonds' (i.e. diamonds procured in and through intrastate conflicts) and the pressure on, and shifts in policy on this issue by the De Beers Company.

Dutch response to the humanitarian dimensions of the conflicts discussed in this report was generous, although not without political consequences. The three cases demonstrate a different degree of Dutch involvement, ranging from *ad hoc* responses to humanitarian needs in Liberia to institutionalized multi-donor engagement in Sudan. In Rwanda, the regional dimensions of the refugee crisis initially distracted international attention from the needs of displaced people and genocide survivors inside the country. Yet with regard to Rwanda's post-conflict rehabilitation one may conclude that the Netherlands provided aid on a very generous scale. Here Dutch engagement was more timely and voluminous, even if its rate of success depended largely on the actions of the Rwandan government. A joint emergency and rehabilitation programme was implemented throughout the post-conflict period. The impact of Dutch interventions enabled and facilitated the government of Rwanda to come to terms with the internal security situation and as such served its purpose. However, whether or not there will be a follow-up to these efforts and how is as yet unsure.

In all cases the Netherlands was aware of the fact that humanitarian aid was abused by the belligerents and that it helped to fuel the dynamics of violence. In the case of Rwanda, inconclusive discussions were held about the role of Hutu extremists in the refugee camps and their abuse of

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6) I. Smillie, L. Gberie and R. Hazleton (January 2000), *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security* (Partnership Africa Canada).

humanitarian resources. Ultimately, this problem was resolved, not politically by the West but by the RPF on the battlefield. Similarly, the Dutch government provided large sums of money to the Rwandan government, yet failed to influence its policies. Despite the fact that the Netherlands had become Rwanda's principal donor, it, too, was confronted with the arrogant and high-handed posture of a regime under threat. The fact that Minister Pronk showed understanding for Rwanda's security concerns, had chosen to support its new government and adopted a lenient attitude towards its *faux pas* did not yield him much leverage. Finally, in Sudan the same problem was at work. On the one hand, the Dutch showed awareness of the abuse of their humanitarian resources, discussed and even threatened to halt the flow of money and food. On the other hand, it has so far proved impossible to question the wisdom of humanitarian prevalence and stop the disbursement of resources, if required by political and military conditions. The intensifying effects on the dynamics of hostilities seem to become accepted as a normal side effect of humanitarian assistance.

One is hence left with another serious flaw in Dutch conflict policy, *i.e.* inability to influence developments. Threats issued to the parties to conflict are empty as they are accompanied by carrots without sticks. Its unwillingness to use its abundant resources for certain political ends, however commendable, makes it difficult for the Netherlands to overcome some of the constrictions ingrained in its status as a minor power in international politics. On the contrary, it opens the door to abuse, as the Dutch government continually emits signals that it will persist with the flow of aid. This ultimately amounts to cheque-book diplomacy without attendant influence. Neither Rwanda nor the Sudanese parties were thus much impressed by Dutch pressures. Admittedly, Liberia has benefited from less aid than it potentially could have had due to the instability of Taylor's rule. However, as Dutch policy was helpful in his elevation to the Liberian Presidency, this can hardly pose as an example of effective influence waged by Dutch policy-makers. The fact, however, that the Dutch government more or less accepts, or acquiesces in, its lack of political influence may reflect not just the Netherlands' self-perception as a minor actor on the world stage, but, more concretely, the limited significance of its interests at stake in these conflicts.