

The Hidden Costs of Power-Sharing: Reproducing Insurgent Violence in Africa

Denis M. Tull & Andreas Mehler

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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War insurgencies have come to occupy the centre stage of violent conflicts in Africa and have turned into a critical element of rapid social change in most of the continent's sub-regions. This is particularly true for Central Africa which has become the most insurgency-affected region of the continent ever since Museveni's National Resistance Movement took power in Uganda in 1986.

Insurgencies operate in every country of Central Africa or else threaten the security of governments and populations from their rear-bases in neighbouring states. Among these cases, the war in the DR Congo has drawn the most intense attention of outside observers. A protracted conflict of gigantic proportions, the conflict has involved at least six foreign armies, two major insurgencies, half a dozen of smaller armed movements as well as a plethora of militias. Likewise, West Africa too has seen its share of rebel movements. Most recently, even one of the putative cornerstones of stability in the region, Côte d'Ivoire, has come under the assaults of various armed movements, pushing the country to the brink of a civil war which was only prevented by the intervention of French troops and the subsequent deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping mission. The long list of countries recently affected by insurgencies also includes Liberia, where two insurgency groups and significant external pressures forced former insurgent leader and then President Charles Taylor to seek exile in Nigeria in mid-2003. Both West African countries and the neighbouring states of Guinea and Sierra Leone are part of a wider regional conflict that has been considerably, though far from exclusively, flamed by insurgency movements.

Aside from the quantitative expansion of the phenomenon, the significance of insurrections is also noteworthy on the qualitative level. For one thing, vast stretches

of Africa have more than ever escaped state control and are ‘governed’ by insurgency movements for sustained periods of time; for another, and more important for the purpose of this paper, an increasing number of insurgents eventually find themselves in the government of the state they seek to conquer. Over the past decade, for example, in each, Liberia and the DR Congo, two successive governments were either displaced by insurgents or were forced to share power with their rebel foes.

The steady recurrence of insurgencies in a number of countries across the continent as well as their increasingly frequent inclusion into governments thus seem to indicate that would-be leaders have some reason to conceptualise the organisation of violence as a viable path to occupy at least parcels of state power. Taking this assumption as a starting point, the present paper aims at exploring the underlying factors that contribute to the proliferation of insurgencies as well as their often successful outcomes – success being defined as the taking of state power or parts thereof. Rather than analysing the root causes of rebellion, we propose to probe contextual factors that bear on the rationale of politically ambitious would-be leaders to start insurgency warfare.

To date, careful analysis of the significance of the insurgency phenomenon has been an exception.¹ Arguably, this is to some extent due to the deeply rooted tradition of state-centred analysis in political science and its sub-disciplines.² Unsurprisingly, then, the weakening of state capabilities has been identified as a major explanatory factor of high levels of internal conflict and insurrections in Africa.³ Other commentators have emphasised economic aspects, notably the availability of natural

¹ See, for example, Christopher Clapham (ed.), *African Guerillas*, (James Currey, Oxford, 1998).

² Douglas Lemke, ‘African Lessons for International Relations Theory’, *World Politics*, **56** (October 2003), pp. 114-38.

resources as a facilitating factor helping to set up and sustain insurgencies.⁴ While both factors are important, we argue that an analysis of insurgency-related conflicts in Africa is incomplete without taking into consideration external factors which relate to shifts in the post-1989 international environment, the way outside actors seek to solve violent conflict in Africa and the impact these changes have on the calculus of would-be leaders to organise insurgencies.

Our argument is straightforward: over the past fifteen years, power-sharing agreements between embattled incumbents and insurgents have emerged as the West's preferred instrument of peace-making in Africa. In almost every country in which insurgent leaders mustered sufficient military power to attract the attention of foreign states, insurgents were included into 'governments of national unity'. We argue that the institutionalisation of this practice demonstrates Western willingness to provide political pay-offs for insurgent violence and hereby creates incentive structures which turn the rebel path into an appealing option in the pursuit of otherwise blocked political aspirations. If valid, this hypothesis should have important implications for the policies of Western governments toward Africa and their stated objective of conflict prevention.

The paper is organised as follows: In the first section, we will briefly sketch the trajectory of the biggest insurgency movement of the Congo War, the RCD, which will illustrate that the current debate on greed and grievances neglects the extent to which the strategies of insurgencies are significantly shaped by the international

³ Jeffrey Herbst, Greg Mills, 'The Future of Africa. A New Order in Sight?', *Adelphi Paper*, **361**, 1 (2003), p. 40; Crawford Young, 'The End of the Post-Colonial State in Africa? Reflections on Changing African Political Dynamics', *African Affairs*, **103** (2004), pp. 43-46.

⁴ Among a growing body of literature still most frequently quoted is Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*, (Washington D.C., World Bank, 2001); equally burgeoning are the critiques, see, for example, Chris Cramer, 'Homo Economicus Goes to War. Methodological Individualism, Rational Choice and the Political Economy of War', *World Development*, **30**, 11 (2003), pp. 1845-1864.

environment and strategies of extraversion. Section two addresses the political inconsistencies of Western political engagement in Africa. We will argue that parts of the profound political malaise on much of the continent stem from the ambiguous stance that the West has adopted in regard to both democracy assistance and conflict resolution. We will examine the extent to which these policies have contributed to the creation of contexts which are conducive to ever more violent politics on the continent. As we will analyse in the third section, these inconsistencies have pushed some African countries into a vicious cycle that corroborates the reproduction of insurgency-induced violence. We will develop the hypothesis according to which the West's preferred instrument of conflict resolution, i.e. power-sharing agreements, turns its purpose of conflict resolution as much as the rhetoric of conflict prevention on its head in that it inadvertently encourages would-be leaders elsewhere to embark on the insurgency path. Finally, in the conclusion, we will attempt to formulate policy prescriptions that may help to overcome the dilemma between conflict resolution and conflict prevention.

The Case of the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD)

In spite of military support by Namibia, Angola and Zimbabwe, the government of President Laurent Kabila government proved unable to squash the rebellion of the Rwandan-backed RCD that began in August 1998. A year later, significant pressure from regional and Western governments resulted in the Lusaka agreement which foresaw the holding of a national dialogue whose envisaged outcome was a 'new political order' for the Congo.⁵ After significant delays, and the emergence of further

⁵ International Crisis Group, *The Agreement on a Ceasefire in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, Brussels, 1999, p. 3.

rebellions, the dialogue was finally concluded in late 2002. In accordance with its *raison d'être*, the forum resulted in a comprehensive power-sharing formula which provided the RCD with one of the four Vice-Presidencies as well as numerous other government posts. In the remainder of this section, we will offer a broad sketch of the RCD rebellion, leadership and objectives and its interplay with the international arena. For a start, it seems important to point out the difficulties arising from attempts to categorize the RCD in accordance with motives of ideology or greed. In regard to ideology, for example, the RCD leadership was far too heterogeneous to patch together a coherent political programme. Much like its predecessor, Kabila's AFDL, it was a 'coalition of convenience'⁶ that harboured some strange bedfellows with few commonalities. Roughly speaking, the RCD was composed of four groups: first, former AFDL lieutenants of Rwandophone origin from the Kivus, including Moise Nyarugabo and Bizima Kahara. Former followers of the late President Mobutu made up a second group, notably Alexis Thambwe and Lunda Bululu. A third component of the initial nucleus was constituted by some well-known academics and professionals such as Professor Ernest Wamba dia Wamba and Zahidi Ngoma. The inclusion of these personalities was arguably meant to provide the RCD with internationally renowned figureheads in an effort to shield the RCD against the predictable accusation of being a foreign proxy. Add to this a fourth group of various individuals disappointed or marginalized by Kabila, including Emile Ilunga and Joseph Mudumbi, a former human rights advocate and AFDL official, among others.⁷ Given the heterogeneity of the movement's initial leadership, and the well-known disgust its leading intellectuals (Wamba, Ngoma) harboured for former 'Mobutists',

⁶ Filip Reyntjens, *La guerre des Grands Lacs*, (L'Harmattan, Paris, 1999), p. 220.

⁷ Gauthier de Villers with Jean Omasombo and Erik Kennes, *Guerre et politique. Les trente derniers mois de L.D. Kabila*, (Institut Africain, Tervuren, 2001), p. 49.

some of whom were RCD founding members, it seems almost inconceivable that this motley crew of would-be insurgents had assembled without the impetus of a third party's hidden hand, i.e. Rwanda and Uganda. As such, the story of the RCD seems to underscore Clapham's suggestion that 'insurgencies derive basically from blocked political aspirations'.⁸ It was the Rwandan impetus provided the RCD leaders with an opportunity to conquer state power.

Contrary to their foot soldiers, contemporary rebel leaders, at least in the DRC, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of Congo and Côte d'Ivoire are no social outcasts. Instead, they are a manifestation of 'elite-recycling', a term that was first introduced to describe the limited renewal of political elites in context of the post-1990 democratisation period. For virtually all RCD leaders had formerly served in senior government positions under Mobutu and Kabila and were therefore members of the political establishment.⁹ As such, they did not fight to address societal grievances but in order to re-integrate into a system from which they had been excluded. Former ministers or Prime Ministers under Mobutu, Lunda Bululu and Thambwe as well as Kabila's former followers Kahara, Mudumbi and Nyarugabo, among others, all fall into this category. These personalities possess the connections and resources to organize a rebellion as a means to enforce their (re-)inclusion into a political system which they have few incentives to transform. What is more, their strategies are firmly rooted in well-established postcolonial political practices such as clientelism. The wide acceptance of these practices, as reflected by the behaviour and

⁸ Christopher Clapham, 'Introduction', in Clapham, *African Guerillas*, p. 5.

⁹ A point also made by William Reno, 'The Politics of Insurgency in Collapsing States', *Development and Change*, **33**, 5 (2002), p. 841f.

expectations of local society, especially in a context of pervasive insecurity, put more political or even reform-minded approaches at a disadvantage.¹⁰

The RCD's poor record of governance in the territories under its control further underscores the lack of an agenda for political renewal.¹¹ In fact, the single most important factor to explain this outcome was its largely externally induced creation and its military dependence on Rwanda. Kigali's policy to impose its security interests were by and large incompatible with the more politically oriented approach advocated by the RCD's first President Wamba. The latter's dismissal was indeed a result of these conflicting interests. His successors, likewise appointed by Kigali, were both unable and unwilling to rid themselves of these outside constraints.¹² Perhaps inevitably, the resulting lack of Congolese political ownership of the insurrection put the RCD at great pains to build up a measure of political credibility, let alone to foster local constituencies. Its lack of a political programme, however, does not invalidate the hypothesis that its leaders were seeking to 'unblock' political aspirations through violence.

As for the political economy of the insurgency, the strategies of the RCD leadership as well as its asymmetrical power relations vis-à-vis its Rwandan godfathers throughout the war sit uneasily with the current discourse that describes insurgency movements as essentially greed-driven. While there is no shortage of evidence that economics have played a powerful role in extending and exacerbating the war in the DRC,¹³ it is much more difficult to maintain that greed was the primary motive of the

¹⁰ Reno, 'The Politics of Insurgency'.

¹¹ Denis M. Tull, *The Reconfiguration of Political Order in Postcolonial Africa: A Case Study from North Kivu (DR Congo)*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Hamburg, 2004, chapters 3-5.

¹² International Crisis Group, *The Kivus: The Forgotten Crucible of the Congo Conflict*, Brussels/Nairobi, 2003, pp. 14-22; De Villers et al., *Guerre et politique*, pp. 65-76.

¹³ United Nations, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, New York, 2002.

RCD. To be sure, RCD elites did seize on opportunities to acquire significant resources through tax revenues and the marketing of mineral riches. But this is simply stating the obvious, i.e. that warfare generates resources for violent elites. It does not allow a mechanistic reading to the effect, for instance, that the top RCD leadership has sought to prolong the war for economic purposes. For one thing, it is debatable that the RCD was the main beneficiary of resource exploitation in Eastern Congo. As the United Nation's Panel of Experts observed with regard to the mining businesses, Rwanda 'perennially deprived its junior partner, RCD-Goma, of any significant share in resources and prerogatives' and 'administrators have frequently pointed out that they were unable to manage their army without sufficient resources.'¹⁴ For another, the RCD followed a consistent policy throughout the war intent on accessing state power in Kinshasa, a goal which finally paid off by way of the power-sharing agreement of December 2002.¹⁵ This objective was, of course, linked to the perspective of acquiring resources deriving from sovereignty,¹⁶ but 'this is no more than to say that war is very similar to politics, with the crucial addition of a high degree of explicit violence.'¹⁷ One can therefore conclude that a regime change was the only identifiable goal the rebellion sought to achieve.

We would suggest that the RCD leadership's readiness to subjugate itself to Rwandan interests as well as the use of violence was an entirely rational approach in the pursuit of political power. Without both of them, access to state power would have remained closed. What is more, it would have mattered little had the RCD respected human rights or sought to garner local support in Eastern Congo in a 'Maoist fashion'. RCD

¹⁴ United Nations, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts*, para. 78.

¹⁵ Initially, however, it had hoped for an outright military victory.

¹⁶ Pierre Englebert, *Why Congo Persists: Sovereignty, Globalization, and the Violent Reproduction of a Weak State*, (Queen Elizabeth House Working Paper No. 95, Oxford, 2003).

leaders did not ignore local hostility towards their movement, but they had few incentives to mend this state of affairs.¹⁸ Once the military stalemate prevented an outright victory on the battlefield, it was in the international realm that the gathering of support and respectability mattered most and, consequently, the RCD put much emphasis on its external relations.

Thus, and in addition to the use of violence as a bargaining chip, the second most important factor facilitating access to state power to insurgency leaders is international recognition. As we will explain in greater detail in the following section, the Western world's willingness to deal with insurgents has dramatically increased since the end of the Cold War. In response, insurgents have expanded their efforts to bolster external ties; that is, to seek and foment formal international recognition that either provides diplomatic support at the expense of internationally marginalized incumbents or to facilitate their inclusion in externally brokered power-sharing governments. Frequently, the energy invested by insurgents into warfare is only matched by diplomatic efforts, hereby pushing domestic political agendas even further to the background. From its inception, for example, the RCD was greatly preoccupied with the prerogative to seek international recognition as a legitimate contender for Congolese state power.

This was arguably the very reason why intellectuals like Wamba were granted the formal leadership of the movement. Also, and mimicking other insurgents, the RCD hired lobbying firms to represent its interests in Washington.¹⁹ Valuable help came

¹⁷ Stephen Ellis, 'The Old Roots of Africa's New Wars', *International Politics and Society*, 2 (2003), p. 34. [http://www.fes.de/ipg/IPG2_2003/ZEITSCHRIFTE.HTM]

¹⁸ We find Mkandawire's explanation for this, e.g. the urban malaise, not compelling, not least because a good number of the most violent acts by rebel movements have in fact taken place in cities like Bangui, Monrovia or Brazzaville. See Thandika Mkandawire, 'The Terrible Toll of Postcolonial 'Rebel-Movements' in Africa. Towards an Explanation of the Violence Against the Peasantry', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 40, 2 (2002), pp. 181-215.

¹⁹ 'Etats-Unis/Congo-K: Emile Ilunga', *La lettre du Continent*, 28 October 1999.

from President Kabila himself, whose erratic rule and close relations with so-called rogue states like Libya and North Korea had compromised him in Western eyes. As such, the RCD justifiably regarded Kabila ‘as its best asset’.²⁰ Not only made the RCD rapid diplomatic inroads on the African scene, hailed by Vice-President Ngoma as ‘the start of recognition’²¹, it also achieved de facto recognition in the Western capitals (Paris, Brussels, Washington) which several RCD-delegations visited at an early stage of the insurrection.²² After a trip to Paris, Ngoma was reported to have

‘welcomed the way Western countries were reacting and the French position on the dispute in particular. He admitted having had contacts in government circles in Paris: “It is my job...France is a country that has understood what we are about, I am pleased to say. The fact that it is keeping out of current events is a good sign [a reference to Paris’ strained relations with the RCD’s Rwandan backers]. Of course, we are label[ed] rebels, which makes it difficult for the international community to adopt a stance, but it is encouraging for us to see that, in Africa as elsewhere, we are not alone in this battle”’.²³

Ngoma’s comments are remarkable for they reflect a sensitivity to the conventions of juridical statehood and, more importantly, an understanding of its changed operational nature in the international realm over the past decade. In the case at hand, for example, then US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Susan Rice, held talks with RCD officials in Kigali shortly after the start of the rebellion (November 1998) – ‘the highest-level contact yet’ between the US administration and the rebels.²⁴

Given past diplomatic practices, the talks in Kigali were a spectacular act of

²⁰ ‘Entrenched and Overstretched’, *Africa Confidential*, 9 October 1998.

²¹ ‘African Foreign Ministers Meet Rebel Leaders in Goma’, *BBC Monitoring*, 20 August 1998.

²² See the following *BBC Monitoring* reports: ‘Rebel Leader Says Kabila Selling Off the National Heritage’, 2 October 1998; ‘Minister, Rebel Counterpart Speak to Belgian Paper About Health Situation’, 6 October 1998; ‘Rebel Leader Leads Delegation to Washington’, 19 October 1998.

²³ ‘Rebel Leader Ngoma Praises French, Western Stance On Rebellion’, *BBC Monitoring*, 20 August 1998. Emphasis added.

recognition. It underlined how shifting international conventions benefit insurgencies whereas incumbent governments are no longer the privileged, let alone sole interlocutors of outside powers. Further below, we will more closely describe and analyze these changes and examine how they play out with regard to insurgency-related conflicts.

The Ambiguities of Western Policies Towards Africa: Democracy Assistance and Conflict Management

Generally speaking, the ambiguities of Western engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa and even the lack of clear political strategies are important elements that help to explain the exacerbation of militarized politics over the past fifteen years. The political inconsistencies of Western governments have been particularly damaging in the field of democracy. Initially, most Western governments supported democratic reforms and eagerly embraced the introduction of liberal politics as a driving force for much needed change on the continent. However, as Clapham and Wiseman correctly predicted in 1995, Western pressure for democratisation was bound to be ephemeral.²⁵ Except for a few egregious cases of foul play, Western countries showed little inclination to sanction reform-resistant governments in one way or the other. In the former Zaire, for example, the period of political liberalisation (1990-96) proved a frustrating exercise for the opposition. President Mobutu created dozens of *partis alimentaires* to undermine an already fragmented opposition. Although donors

²⁴ 'US Envoy Susan Rice Holds Talks in Rwanda with DR Congo Rebels', *BBC Monitoring*, 6 November 1998.

²⁵ Christopher Clapham, John A. Wiseman, 'Conclusion: Assessing the Prospects for the Consolidation of Democracy', in John A. Wiseman (ed.), *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Routledge, London, 1995), p. 228.

suspended development aid, initial Western support for the democracy movement faltered the longer the domestic power struggle endured.

Generally, strict enforcement of political conditionality remained the exception.

Throughout the 1990s, this was evidenced by the fact that the evolution of aid levels of individual African countries did not allow to predict their system of government.²⁶

Some governments such as France's clients in Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Cameroon were even rewarded for their democratic recalcitrance with sharply increased bilateral aid in the early 1990s.²⁷ What is more, reform-minded states received scarce payoffs for undertaking comparatively extensive democratic engineering and the quality of democratic governance had no measurable impact on aid levels.²⁸ As such, the paradigm of political conditionality that many Western countries embraced as a determinant factor of aid allocation was more rhetorical than actual.

Ultimately, the battle field for international 'presentability' of African regimes proved to be the field of electoral politics that Western donors turned into the ultimate yardstick of democratic governance. However, the heavy dominance of the executive and the often pervasive blending of state and ruling party generally prevented progress with regard to the overall freedom of political choice in many African countries. At the same time, Western actors revealed a strong unwillingness or inability to tackle these deeply ingrained patterns of political behaviour and the concomitant fraudulent electioneering.²⁹ As a consequence, past and present incumbents find it fairly easy to satisfy demands for more appropriate electoral

²⁶ Nicolas van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), p. 268.

²⁷ Michael Bratton, Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), p. 241.

²⁸ Van de Walle, *African Economies*, p. 268f.

²⁹ See, for example, Richard Sandbrook, *Closing the Circle. Democratization and Development in Africa*, (Zed Books, London, 2000), pp. 26-32.

procedures whereas the defeat of the opposition is in many instances a foregone conclusion.³⁰ Keeping in mind the rise of the election monitoring industry, it is telling that many ruling parties have shifted their efforts from influencing the outcome of polls on election day itself (e.g. ballot stuffing) to the pre-election period through the intimidation of opposition politicians and their supposed supporters, manipulating voters' lists or the banning of opposition figures from participation in the election (more recently often on grounds of 'dubious nationality'). Blocking opposition access to the media and the massive use of state resources in favour of the incumbent are further common techniques. They may no longer go unnoticed as the final statements of electoral monitoring bodies routinely point at some even serious irregularities. But equally routinely, outsiders affirm that the elections represent a major step forward in the direction of democracy. Even in instances where outside election observers issue severe criticism, as was recently the case in Nigeria, Rwanda, Zambia and Malawi, donors have shied away from taking any consequential action to uphold the credibility of political conditionality. Without allowing substantial democratic progress, a great many of African governments are thus able to maintain international respectability and, hence, a continued aid flow.

As a result, the third wave of democratisation ushered little tangible results to change the rules of the political game and, by extension, to modify the possibility to gain access to political power. Perhaps even worse, the seal of international legitimacy that incumbent frontrunners claim under the guise of electoral democracy has created immense frustration among opposition leaders across the continent. From their perspective, it is a bitter irony of the post-1989 period that their chances to access

³⁰ Although useful recommendations were formulated by experts. See Timothy D. Sisk, 'Elections and Conflict Managements in Africa: Conclusions and Recommendations', in Timothy D. Sisk, Andrew

state power were only marginally enhanced while formerly authoritarian incumbents are able to cast themselves as elected democrats. All of this is not to deny that tremendous democratic progress has been achieved in some African countries, but this pertains mainly to basic rights. Accordingly, public opinion about democracy is volatile.³¹ In a considerable number of African countries, one witnesses the rise of so-called illiberal democracies, an euphemism for electoral autocracies, where effective opportunities for electoral change are simply non-existent.³²

A variety of reasons may explain Western reluctance to challenge bad old habits in electoral autocracies. One of them may be the belief that added pressure on incumbents may prove counterproductive. According to this view, strict enforcement of political conditionality may further destabilise fragile polities and potentially fuel violence by contenders. The approach of keeping the lid on African countries by tacitly supporting incumbent governments may not qualify as a viable strategy, but there is little doubt that this approach is still guiding the policies of Western states towards Africa. This attitude, however, may strongly influence the rationale of would-be leaders who stand or see little chance to effect a turnover of government through elections. Perceiving the path to state power as being blocked in a situation where, at least in theory, it should be open, has created the widespread sentiment among opposition politicians to fight a futile political battle.

While drawing a causal relation between this lesson and the recourse to violence might be exaggerated, we nonetheless believe that the ambivalent stance of Western

Reynolds (eds.), *Elections and Conflict Management in Africa*, (U.S. Institute for Peace, Washington D.C., 1998), pp. 145-171.

³¹ In a briefing paper (Democracy and Electoral Alternation. Evolving African Attitudes, April 2004) by Afrobarometer, it is argued that democratic commitments tend to decline with the passage of time, but can be reinvigorated by an electoral alternation of power. See <http://www.afrobarometer.org/AfrobriefNo9.pdf>.

governments toward democratisation and the perceived but often all too real impossibility of opposition groups to get voted into office did and indeed does send powerful signals to all kinds of ambitious personalities. Not mincing his words, Jean-François Bayart has accused the EU and its members to have

‘generally blocked the political revolutions that alone would have led to the transformation of the productive texture of societies. In so doing, Europe has condemned Africa to further military turmoil in the form of civil wars and interventions of a para-colonial or proto-colonial type by some Sub-Saharan states.’³³

The recent sad developments in Côte d’Ivoire are indeed illuminating in this regard.³⁴

Throughout the 1990s, the long-time opposition parties *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI) and *Rassemblement Démocratique Républicain* (RDR) felt exposed to all sorts of electoral manipulation by the government. International reactions to the obviously rigged elections in both 1990 and 1995 were lukewarm at best.³⁵ The rhetoric of democracy bonuses and political conditionality (e.g. in the wake of Mitterrand’s famous La Baule speech) must have sounded particularly hypocritical in that country. When, at the end of 1999, a mutiny turned into a coup against the ailing Bédié regime, both parties were allegedly involved in the preparations of their own coups d’Etat, indicating that recourse to violence was at this stage already an instrument that both

³² There were ten democracies in Africa in 2002. See Monty G. Marshall, Ted Gurr, *Peace and Conflict 2003. A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy*, (College Park, University of Maryland, 2003), p. 25.

³³ Jean-François Bayart, ‘Commentary: Towards a New Start for Africa and Europe’, *African Affairs*, **103**, 412 (2004), p. 456.

³⁴ See the special issues of *Afrique Contemporaine*, **206** (2003) ‘Dossier Côte d’Ivoire’ and *Politique Africaine* **89** (2003) ‘La Côte d’Ivoire en guerre’, on the French involvement particularly Stephen Smith, ‘La politique d’engagement de la France à l’épreuve de la Côte d’Ivoire’, *Politique Africaine* **89** (2003), pp. 112-126.

³⁵ One of the authors served as an election monitor in an ill-defined observation mission to Côte d’Ivoire in 1995 and can attest to this. The professional standard of e.g. EU election observation missions improved in the late 1990s. However, more important is the political will to use the findings and reports of the missions.

opposition parties were contemplating – and not surprisingly so.³⁶ In early 2000 both parties were represented in the transitional government of rebel general Guéi – certainly as a recognition of their political weight, but perhaps as well of their ‘spoiling capacities’. Subsequently the RDR was kicked out of government and its leader Ouattara barred from standing as a candidate in the 2000 presidential elections. Rumours of coup preparations by military officers close to the RDR circulated and the polarisation of the country’s political system set the stage for the corroboration of political violence.

The FPI chairman Gbagbo and Guéi faced each other in the October 2000 elections as the FPI leadership feared becoming yet again the victim of electoral rigging. On the eve of election day Gbagbo appealed to his followers to occupy strategic posts in the capital if manipulations should take place. On the day after the polls, it quickly turned out that Gbagbo, the ‘historic opponent’,³⁷ had won; the minister of the Interior tried in vain to annul the elections and to force the independent electoral commission to proclaim false results.³⁸ The ministry finally made public its own results which declared Guéi to be the frontrunner of the first round of the elections. This was followed by a large popular uprising in Abidjan. In the night of 25 October 2000 the headquarters of the presidential guard were attacked without success, but the following day FPI followers, helped by a sympathising Gendarmerie, got the upper hand. The loyalist units fled and Guéi had to leave the capital. New confrontations erupted while the electoral commission re-started publicizing results from the different constituencies. Violent demonstrations by RDR sympathisers – rather expected in the run-up to elections – now turned into a contestation of Gbagbo’s

³⁶ Source: interviews in Abidjan, February 2000.

³⁷ Claude Hélène Perrot, ‘Laurent Gbagbo: Portrait d’un opposant historique’, *Afrique Contemporaine*, **196** (2000), pp. 110-113.

electoral victory. Bloody encounters between FPI and the Gendarmerie on the one hand and RDR supporters on the other occurred degenerated into pogroms against the 'Dioula', an imprecise term used for all 'Northerners' suspected of supporting Ouattara. Officially, 171 people were slaughtered.

From the perspective of both political parties their behaviour is explicable. Both saw a 'historical opportunity' to access power – the FPI after 18 years in opposition under repressive conditions, the RDR after seven years of exclusion – a history of blocked aspirations in the 1990s informed their behaviour in 2000. The main responsibility lies with the local actors but did the international community make use of all the means at its disposal to prevent the political violence? What kind of incentives did external actors offer to the conflicting parties?

A second aspect of involuntary external involvement of external actors, or rather their inaction, is important. The government in Côte d'Ivoire did not dispose of defence capacities by the end of the 1990s. The national army was always considered to be less important for the security of the regime than the presence of French troops. This meant that heavy investments in the national army or the Gendarmerie were never made.³⁹ When the relative disengagement of the French government – in Africa as a whole and in Côte d'Ivoire in particular – coincided with the deep internal crisis, this proved to be an important factor aggravating the conflict: the hasty recruitment of young soldiers, sometimes in very informal ways, led to the creation of uncontrollable units and to a more indiscriminate use of violence in the period between 2000 and 2002. The September 2002 rebellion met little resistance by the domestic security

³⁸ For a telling account see *Jeune Afrique*, **2078**, 7-13 November 2000.

³⁹ An interesting account is given by the Franco-Canadian journalist Guy-André Kieffer, who 'disappeared' in Côte d'Ivoire in 2004: 'Armée ivoirienne: le refus du déclassé', *Politique Africaine*, **78** (2000), pp. 26-44. See as well the anonymous article (C.D.G.) 'L'armée ivoirienne: de la marginalisation à la prise du pouvoir', *Afrique Contemporaine*, **193** (2000), pp. 9-12.

forces and only a late and half-hearted military reaction by the French military which, however, saved the Gbagbo regime. It was only in the aftermath that the regime expanded its military capabilities substantially – again at a highly problematic pace and by very suspect means. On balance, the long-lasting but declining military tutelage by an outside force proved to be detrimental to a peaceful settlement of the crisis which had arguably been prepared by France’s ambivalent political role in the country throughout the 1990s.

The case of Côte d’Ivoire lends support to findings claiming that states undergoing transitions, i.e. states governed by hybrid regimes, are six times more likely than democracies and two and one-half times more likely as autocracies to witness outbreaks of societal wars.⁴⁰ Needless to say, this does not establish a causal relationship between Western ambivalence towards (flawed) democratisation processes on the one hand and the rise of insurgency movements and internal conflict on the other. And, of course, insurgencies often take place in countries that do not even qualify as electoral autocracies. However, many internal conflicts originate in failed democratisation experiments as, for example, the cases of Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville or the DRC suggest.

As a result, most Western governments and organisations shifted their priorities in Africa from democracy support to the fields of conflict prevention, conflict management or back to Cold war-type notions of ‘stability’ in the course of the 1990s.⁴¹ Still Africa has remained the continent with the highest incidence of violent conflict. Even though the responsibility for this disturbing fact should not be solely attributed to outside actors, it remains nonetheless true that the foreign policies of

⁴⁰ See Marshall, Gurr, *Peace and Conflict 2003*, p. 17.

⁴¹ For the case of the European Union, see Gorm Rye Olsen ‘Promoting Democracy, Preventing Conflict: The European Union and Africa’, *International Politics*, **39** (September 2002), pp. 311-328.

Western countries continue to have a non-negligible impact on political processes on the continent. What explains the constantly high numbers of conflicts in spite of the purported attempts of the West to solve or even prevent them? As noted, unsteady support for democracy is one possible explanation for this outcome. What is more, the pervasiveness of conflicts in Africa may be linked to conceptual weaknesses underlying Western policy shifts from democracy support to conflict management and prevention, notably the neglected relationship between democracy and violent conflict. Finally, the failure to prevent violent conflict may be attributed to a bias for conflict management at the expense of prevention. For all the pride of place that has been given to conflict prevention, re-active decision-making remains as dominant as ever. All of this seems to underscore the harsh verdict that there ‘is no discernible project that the West somehow seeks to impose on Africa. Rather, the Western posture is one of seeking to be engaged at low cost.’⁴²

We argue that Western attempts at even resolving ongoing conflicts are characterised by limited engagement. Confronted with increasingly effective pressure by the media and international human rights groups ‘to do something’, standing back and letting conflicts run their course is no longer an option which Western governments can afford to contemplate.⁴³ At the same time, the West is demonstrating an obvious reluctance to being ‘sucked in’ African conflicts, particularly after the disastrous experiences in Somalia and Rwanda. Crisis diplomacy to influence the turn of events in insurgency-affected countries has become the option of choice to find a compromise between the countervailing logics of appropriateness and

⁴² Herbst, Mills, ‘The Future of Africa’, p. 40.

⁴³ See, for example, the evolution of the ‘public pressure curve’ that rose in regard to the Ituri conflict and the ethnic cleansing in Darfur.

consequentiality. This re-active behaviour has typically taken the form of power-sharing agreements between embattled governments and insurgencies.⁴⁴

A specific instrument of conflict mediation, power-sharing agreements are usually brokered in stalled conflicts where neither side has the military power to decisively defeat the other. They include the negotiating of a peace-settlement between incumbents and their opponents that provides for the partition of power within a government of national unity. This is followed by the hammering out of provisions for a political transition whose endpoint is the holding of multiparty elections. Peace settlements are often accompanied by the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping mission to support the transitions until or sometimes even beyond its end. Underlying the logic of power-sharing is the assumption that the accommodation of the demands of anti-regime movements has the potential to de-militarise the political context. Likewise, it is believed that power-sharing institutions 'promote moderate and cooperative behaviour among contending groups by fostering a positive-sum perception of political interactions.'⁴⁵

To date, the record of power-sharing agreements appears to be mixed at best, not least because international mediators had to make the painstaking experience that their job is all but finished with the signing ceremony of peace accords.⁴⁶ This paper cannot offer a critical survey of the effectiveness of internationally brokered power-sharing agreements. Rather, it seeks to outline some of the fallacies and unintended consequences that characterise the generalized approach of power-sharing. We will

⁴⁴ Ian S. Spears, 'Understanding Inclusive Peace Agreements in Africa: The Problems of Sharing Power', *Third World Quarterly*, **21**, 1 (2000), pp. 105-118.

⁴⁵ Caroline Hartzell, Matthew Hoddie, 'Institutionalizing Peace: Power Sharing and Post-Civil War Conflict Management', *American Journal of Political Science*, **47**, 2 (April 2003), p. 318.

⁴⁶ See Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild, Elizabeth M. Cousens (eds.), *Ending Civil Wars. The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2002); Timothy D. Sisk, *Peacemaking in Civil Wars. Obstacles, Options, and Opportunities*, (Occasional Paper, The Joan B. Kroc Institute for

start with an overview of the greatly changed international context in which contemporary insurgents are operating.

Insurgencies and the International Arena: Conquest by Power-Sharing

The international standing of insurgencies was dramatically enhanced by the end of the Cold War.⁴⁷ Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the exigencies of a bipolar international system and conventions of juridical statehood put a premium on the incumbent government of a sovereign state. Even though insurgencies received considerable outside backing, internal warfare in the pre-1989 context was nonetheless framed by the notion of juridical statehood: parties to a conflict were neatly divided into ‘rebels’ and those who were in control of the national capital. State rulers were clearly in an advantageous position as their incumbent status guaranteed an access to outside resources (military, economic, diplomatic) far superior to those available to their challengers. These mechanisms underwent a significant shift since the end of the Cold War even as the ‘negative sovereignty’ associated with Third World polities continued to protect the state as a juridical entity. In the process, the *state’s* sovereignty appears to have been somewhat de-linked or even separated from those claiming to represent it, i.e. incumbent governments. The imposition of economic conditionalities by Western governments and the International Financial Institutions as well as their increasing collaboration with non-state actors (primarily

International Peace Studies, 2001); Roland Paris, *At War’s End. Building Peace After Civil War*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004).

⁴⁷ The introduction to this section relies heavily on Christopher Clapham’s work. See his *African and the International System*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996), chap. 9 and ‘Degrees of Statehood’, *Review of International Studies*, **24** (1998), pp. 143-157.

NGOs), indeed the sidelining of the state, notably in the field of ‘development’, presents a vivid illustration of this change.⁴⁸

The most spectacular marker of this shift, however, relates to international attitudes towards insurgency movements. A sharp decline of vital interests and changes at the international level, the domestic level, or sometimes both (e.g. France), was accompanied by the rolling back of direct Western involvement in the domestic affairs of African states. Significantly, this was also the case in countries that witnessed armed conflicts or the emergence of insurgencies. Prior to 1989, more or less covert support for rebels was an important instrument of Cold War tactics. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, armed movements were more readily integrated into the international relations of sovereign states. This development signalled an important departure from previous international conventions to the extent that incumbents no longer enjoyed exclusive access to outside support and hence political survival.

This is particularly obvious in regard to war-torn countries where outsiders’ attempts to solve conflict through power-sharing require –by definition – the recognition of all the warring parties, including the insurgents. Thus, it entails a major shift in the domestic balance of power since external actors level the political playing field in favour of insurgents at the expense of state leaders:

‘Instead of regarding one party as representing the state, and the others as opposing it, external mediators came to conceive all the parties as subsisting on a more or less equal footing; their function in turn was no longer to protect those who could claim (...) to represent the state, but rather to achieve a political settlement through recognition of all the competing parties.’⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Firoze Manji, Carl O’Coill, ‘The Missionary Position: NGOs and Development in Africa’, *International Affairs*, 78, 3 (2002), pp. 578-580.

What is more, the containment approach focusing on the warring parties put civilian opposition parties into an uneasy position: irrespective of their participation in negotiations, they were either forced to take a pro-government position (and were dealt with as a negligible partner) or a pro-rebellion position (and exposing themselves to all sorts of accusations).⁵⁰ From the perspective of the West, the only way to overcome the conundrum of limited interests and the urge ‘to do something’ was a low key engagement whose logic rested on de facto recognition of insurgents as legitimate ‘stakeholders’ of domestic power struggles. As long as they are sufficiently powerful in military terms, insurgencies can neither be neglected nor marginalized. Regardless of their often appalling human rights record, their factual power warrants international consideration.

Perhaps the best known and most appalling case, the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone were incorporated into a government of national unity following the July 1999 Lomé peace agreement. Similar processes are taking place in Burundi where Western actors continue to press for inclusive peace talks at any cost. Most recently, and discomfortingly enough, the EU continued to urge the FLN, the only remaining rebel group not taking part in the country’s peace process, to join peace talks even in the immediate wake of the assault on the Gatumba refugee camp inside Burundi in August 2004 which left some 160 refugees dead and for which the FLN had claimed responsibility.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Clapham, ‘Degrees of Statehood’, p. 153.

⁵⁰ In the case of Côte d’Ivoire the Northern rebellion effectively succeeded where the RDR had failed: the French-brokered Marcoussis peace accord in January 2003 addressed both the main structural conflict causes and the Northern grievances. But the equally French-brokered power-sharing arrangement at the following Kléber summit (with the entry of rebel ministers into the government) was widely interpreted as putting a premium on violence (and discredited the French mediation in the eyes of some major players).

⁵¹ ‘UN Weighs Situation in Burundi Following Massacre’, *Reuters*, 15 August 2004. On the Burundian peace process, see the reporting of the International Crisis Group.

The degree to which external actors have been prepared to put a premium on the use of violence by insurgents as a determining factor to regulate internal conflict is starkly demonstrated by cases in which insurgents fall short of attaining the somewhat invisible threshold to gain recognition. The MFDC rebels in Senegal's Casamance region, for example, are too weak (and perhaps unwilling) to wage a kind of conflict that could disturb the national polity as a whole. As long as this is not the case, Western governments see little reason to press the Senegalese government to a negotiated solution.⁵² A somewhat similar case is the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda. In addition to its inability to pose a serious threat to the Museveni government, though, its seemingly irrational and 'bizarre' posture is another factor which disqualifies it in Western eyes as a possible negotiating party.⁵³ As such, it is not exaggerated to say that the more powerful violent non-state actors are, the more likely is their inclusion into Western-sponsored power-sharing agreements. Early and recurrent examples for a rather successful strategy to profit from foreign-sponsored (but nationally-brokered) power-sharing agreements are to be found in Chad. There, 'politico-military movements' provide illuminating illustrations for violent rent-seeking inasmuch as the change from a civilian party agent to rebel leader (and back again) is characteristic. Both of the country's most prominent politicians were at one point 're-civilised' warlords: President Idriss Déby and the Chairman of the National Assembly „General“ Abdelkader Kamougué. The two rebel movements *Comité de Sursaut National pour la Paix et la Démocratie* CSNPD (under Moise Ketté) and its off-spring, the *Forces Armées pour la République Fédérale*

⁵² Geneviève Gasser, “‘Manger ou s’en aller’: que veulent les opposants armés casamançais?’, in Momar-Coumba Diop (ed.), *Le Sénégal contemporain*, (Khartala, Paris, 2002), pp. 459-498.

⁵³ On the LRA, see Frank van Acker, ‘Uganda and the Lord’s Resistance Army: The Order No One Ordered’, *African Affairs*, **104**, 412 (2004), pp. 335-357; Kevin C. Dunn, ‘Killing for Christ? The Lord’s Resistance Army of Uganda’, *Current History*, (May 2004), pp. 206-210.

(FARF), were recognised as political parties during the 1990s (1994, 1998).⁵⁴ Ketté enjoyed ministerial rank before slipping out of the sinecure system and founding a new rebel movement (before being murdered in 2001). This might be called politico-military entrepreneurship in its purest form as it entails blackmailing sinecures by military means. The strategy is dangerous, however: Mahmoud Nahor, whose party, the *Union des Forces Démocratiques* (UFD), failed to attract many votes at the 1998 polls, subsequently decided to resort to violence. He ordered the kidnapping of some foreign tourists (probably not the best way to attract foreign-sponsored rents at a later stage) whose liberation by force cost the lives of 11 people. The UFD was immediately disbanded by court order and in a logic of revenge the state reinforced repression and mistreatment of Nahor's ethnic countrymen in the city of Sarh.⁵⁵ As such, a strategy of shifting from peaceful to violent opposition (and back again) can be very helpful to prove a certain 'nuisance capacity' as the basis to attract rents of violence, namely inclusion into government. Its supplement for lower ranks is the forcing of material rewards in the framework of demobilisation programmes. The bill is usually paid by some donor organisations hoping – frequently in vain - to contribute to sustainable peace. The opposite might be actually closer to the truth: rent-creating fosters rent-seeking behaviour. While spoilers can hardly be ignored, it is highly dangerous to simply reward them.

By the same token, the three mutinies (1996-97) in the Central African Republic can be partly explained with the 'violent rents' syndrome. It is revealing that the crisis could be temporarily ended by forming a coalition government including all political camps and the rebels. Former heads of state and chairmen of political parties Dacko

⁵⁴ However, in the case of FARF this happened only after the murder of its leader Laokein Bardé who was probably betrayed by his own followers.

⁵⁵ *N'Djaména Hebdo*, 12 February 1998, 5 March 1998.

and Kolingba received substantial state pensions – primes to renounce from violence after threatening to use violence.⁵⁶ In a country where recurrent budgetary aid, foremost by France, is necessary to pay part of the salary-arrears in the civil service (at some stage peaking at 29 months of unpaid salaries) this agreement amounted to a foreign-sponsored subvention for those two leaders whereas the main causes of the conflict were hardly addressed.

In summary, significant changes in Western foreign policies toward Africa have emerged since the early 1990s. These relate first to the rather tacit pressure for democratisation beyond the level of electoral procedures and, second, to the international recognition of insurgency movements to the detriment of the embattled governments of weak states – and the civilian opposition. Both aspects touch upon domestic processes that have arguably dominated political events over the last 15 years: political reform and violent conflict. It is now time to examine the interplay between the four dimensions: domestic and international, political reform and insurgency struggles. Both of the latter aspects centre on one key issue: access to state power. The relationship we hypothesise between flawed democracy and violent conflict is that the road to state power in electoral autocracies is usually closed to non-violent political actors. As such, the struggle for access to state power by opposition politicians, often pursued under great personal duress and risk, cannot pay off. At the same time, however, opposition politicians and other would-be leaders observe radically different responses of Western governments to violent political action in insurgency-affected countries, where strongmen embarking on the rebel path to state power impose themselves by establishing political facts which the West seems to be

⁵⁶ Andreas Mehler, 'Meuterei der Armee und Tribalisierung von Politik in der 'demokratisierten Neokolonie' Zentralafrikanische Republik (ZAR)', in Heidrun Zinecker (ed.), *Unvollendete Demokratisierung in Nichtmarktökonomien*, (Fakultas, Amsterdam, 1999), p. 208

willing to accept. So civilian opposition figures nowadays have some ground to conceive themselves as the weakest link in the struggle for political power in many African countries. The West's readiness to engage with militarily effective insurgencies and to accommodate their demands by advocating their incorporation into national governments for the sake of 'peace' amounts to an incentive to take recourse to violence to conquer state power, or at least to receive a seat at the bargaining table.⁵⁷ In this sense, power-sharing agreements present buy-in tactics for groups favouring violence. They de facto amount to an international recognition or even legitimisation of political violence and leave the hapless non-armed opposition perplexed. The hugely unpopular temporary alliance between Congolese veteran opposition leader Tshisekedi's *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social* (UDPS) and the RCD rebel movement in the Congo can only be explained against the background of the international practices just described, for they quite explicitly honour violence for the sake of a short-term appeasement and penalize those without guns.⁵⁸ Over the past 15 years, this logic was at work in Burundi, Rwanda, the DRC, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, Central African Republic and Chad. It is a practice that sends powerful signals to all kinds of aspiring would-be leaders and those heads of neighbouring governments willing to support them. Given the often poor capacities of national armies as well as Western governments' apparent policy to put a premium on violence, the insurgency path is an obvious and viable route to political power.

It is apparent, then, that would-be rulers respond to the incentive structures that outside actors are unwittingly establishing. This is part of extraversion strategies to

⁵⁷ William Reno, 'The Failure of Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone', *Current History*, (May 2001), pp. 219-225.

⁵⁸ Source: interviews with UDPS officials of North and South Kivu, Goma, November 2002.

assert new claims on resources and to authority which are far from being the privileged domain of state rulers.⁵⁹ They are a crucible in the strategic repertoire of insurgents to contest domestic power. This is also to suggest that the hypothesised relationship between the insurgent path and Western engagement with violent non-state actors is far from speculative. What could provide more compelling evidence for this than the fact that insurgents go to great length to set up and maintain international relations with foreign governments, international NGOs and transnational actors?⁶⁰ Whereas it is impossible to establish a causal inference between Western responses to internal conflict (power-sharing) and the mushrooming of insurgencies, it is plausible to argue that the efforts undertaken by insurgents to gain diplomatic and international recognition provide firm evidence that local actors are highly sensitive to the signals of Western governments. To be more precise, it can be argued that the West's pursuit of power-sharing agreements to end violent conflict provides an enabling environment and even effective encouragement to would-be leaders in Africa to take a violent short-cut to state power or for political actors in marginalised regions to voice their grievances.⁶¹ The recent uprising in Sudan's Darfur region, for example, was to a certain extent a response to the power-sharing agreement between the SPLA and the Khartoum government whose conclusion had been pushed for by Western governments, notably the U.S. To the Darfur rebels, the Naivahsa peace process clearly illustrated that violence paid off and that, conversely, their grievances were unlikely to be taken into consideration by either Khartoum or the international

⁵⁹ Robert Latham, Ronald Kassimir, Thomas M. Callaghy, 'Introduction: Transboundary Formations, Intervention, Order, and Authority', in Thomas M. Callaghy, Ronald Kassimir, Robert Latham (eds.), *Intervention & Transnationalism in Africa*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 13; Jean-François Bayart, 'Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion', *African Affairs*, **99** (2000), pp. 217-267.

⁶⁰ Clifford Bob, 'Marketing Rebellion: Insurgent Groups, International Media, and NGO Support', *International Politics*, **38** (2001), pp. 311-334.

community unless they imposed themselves through violent means. Disconcertingly, Khartoum's genocidal campaign in Darfur was possible exactly because the regime was able to play on Western fears that their political recognition of the Darfur rebels' claims would imperil the Naivasha accords.⁶²

Should the hypothesis on the interplay between external incentives and the rise of insurgencies be valid, it reflects a troubling political development that bodes ill for the prevention of conflicts in Africa. It seems to underwrite the marginalisation of civilian politics and the growing militarization of politics, whereby the recourse to violence holds political promises which are even internationally endorsed in the guise of power-sharing agreements.

Beyond the demonstration effects individual cases do set for would-be leaders in other countries, it is also questionable whether power-sharing agreements are truly conducive to the establishment of peace inside of war-torn countries. First, many rebel leaders behave in office much as in wartime (i.e. Sankoh, Taylor), effectively forestalling any chance to return to some degree of normality or even a perspective of development; second, some agreements are so complicated that they effectively defy implementation. Without significant and long-term external backing, these agreements are bound to collapse and ignite a return to war; third, the notion of inclusion that underwrites the concept of power-sharing runs the risk of generating ever more insurgent groups that are not included in any given settlement. As such, the practice of power-sharing may not only induce insurgencies elsewhere, but may also have a significant impact inside a war-torn country. Again, the trajectory of the Congo war and the RCD insurgency is illuminating in this regard inasmuch as the Lusaka ceasefire and the political process it envisioned conveyed a powerful and unanimous

⁶¹ Smith, 'La Politique d'engagement', p. 121.

message to some parties to the conflict. While many insurgencies may be prone to defections, it is certainly no coincidence that as soon as the political terms of the Lusaka accords (power-sharing, transitional government) had been established, the defections from the RDC and the proliferation of smaller insurgencies started in earnest, including the RCD-National and the RCD-ML which progressively fragmented even further into factions led by Wamba, Tibasima, Nyamwisi and Lubanga who strove to become rebel leaders in their own right. Given the underlying logic of power-sharing agreements according to which all armed insurgents are to be included in negotiations, these personalities understandably expected to be handled accordingly by the mediators – indeed, this was the very reason they were created for to begin with. By sticking to the principle of *inclusive* negotiations for the sake of peace, the mediators were confronted with the dilemma to accommodate the demands of ever growing number of factions to be included into the negotiation. In the end, unending discussions were required to decide whether and how the new factions should be included. This was one of the major reasons for the costly delay of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in the course of which the vast majority of an overall death toll of over three million people perished in Eastern Congo – a tragedy which mirrors events in Angola and Rwanda where more people died after the signing of a peace agreement than during the years of war preceding it.⁶³ Given that only a small minority of embattled governments is confronted by one insurgency movement alone, the proliferation of rebel groups amidst ongoing internal wars may well be an indirect result of looming power-sharing agreements.

⁶² International Crisis Group, *Now or Never in Darfur*, Nairobi/Brussels, 2004, p. i-ii.

⁶³ John Stephen Stedman, 'Introduction', in Stedman, Rothchild, Cousens, *Ending Civil Wars*, p. 1.

Conclusion

In the early 1990s, there was much talk both inside and outside Africa to the effect that violent takeovers of state power would no longer be permitted. Bodies such as the Organization of African Unity even declared that putsch leaders would no longer be granted outside recognition. No doubt meant to discourage army officers from staging coups d'état, such laudable, if naive discourses presently seem to be outdated to the extent that violence remains an effective instrument to access state power in Africa which is, through the power of facts, accepted or even recognised by Western actors in their hapless attempts to limit the damage.

It is our hypothesis that external efforts to terminate internal warfare may be as much part of the problem as they are part of the solution. Much like emergency assistance and development aid, conflict management is an immensely complex field of political intervention in which moral ambitions alone are not sufficient to create desired outcomes.⁶⁴ As we have argued, this is so because the establishment of power-sharing agreements as outsiders' preferred instrument of conflict resolution may unfold potentially dangerous albeit unintended consequences. The danger stems from the fact that power-sharing is almost invariably proposed and often aggressively pushed for by external actors. The institutionalisation of power-sharing creates a degree of predictability for politically ambitious entrepreneurs. Falling short of outright military victory, insurgents can reasonably expect to receive parcels of state power in return for 'peace'. Thus a host of power-sharing agreements in Africa since the early 1990s has set numerous precedents which have created an opportunity structure for violent entrepreneurs elsewhere. One may even conclude that these buy-off tactics contribute

to the further militarization of politics in Africa as they do, by definition, marginalize civilian parties. Neglecting this contextual dimension carries the risk of inflated essentialist reporting whereby insurgents are either portrayed as ‘freedom fighters’ or, more often, as ‘greed-driven warlords’. Making sense of contemporary insurgencies therefore begs the consideration of the nexus of internal and external factors and its bearing on the motives, trajectory and outcome of any given insurgency. Perhaps counter-intuitively, attempts at conflict resolution have thus undermined the perspective of conflict prevention. To put it differently: even if power-sharing agreements were to bring peace to any given war-torn country, the practice as such may well spawn outbreaks of insurgent violence elsewhere.

As a result, outside actors keen to resolve violent internal conflicts in Africa face a profound dilemma. To overcome it, two rather bold solutions for outside actors intuitively come to mind: first, let conflicts run their course; second, always provide support (diplomatically, militarily) to incumbent regimes attacked by insurgents. The first one, of course, echoes Luttwak’s (in)famous proposal to ‘give war a chance’ which argues that inept meddling by outsiders has often postponed peace and perpetuated war and human suffering.⁶⁵ Although the logic underpinning this argument is somewhat compelling, its caveats are numerous. Most notably it neglects the fact that many ‘civil wars’ are not – strictly speaking – internal, a point which accounts for their durability and even self-sustaining character (e.g. Angola, Sudan). As such, letting them ‘bleed out’ hardly passes for the truly humanitarian thing to do. As for providing exclusive support to incumbent governments, it is self-evident that

⁶⁴ On emergency assistance, see Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm. How Aid Can Support Peace or War*, (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1999); on development aid, see Peter Uvin, *Aiding Violence. The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*, (Kumarian Press, West Hartford, 1998).

⁶⁵ Edward N. Luttwak, ‘Give War a Chance’, *Foreign Affairs*, **78** (July/August 1999), pp. 36-44.

such a policy will almost inevitably entrench autocratic and repressive regimes, in turn forestalling any chance of promoting positive political change.

If the hypothesized repercussions of the power-sharing paradigm are to be avoided, or at least to be limited, outside actors need to recognise that the short-term quelling of large-scale violence through power-sharing is not to be confounded with peace. In Sierra Leone as well as Liberia, for example, power-sharing agreements, Lomé and Abuja respectively, resulted in each case in a disastrous ‘warlord’s peace’ that was unsustainable from the start.⁶⁶ Given the gross and systematic human rights abuses the rebels committed prior to the peace accords, it was simply irresponsible to presume that they would change their attitudes once occupying government offices.

Since more conflicts will surely erupt and peace settlements in some form or the other will inevitably be brokered, we therefore advance two proposals. First, external brokers need to raise the threshold which grants to insurgents a place at the negotiation table. As such, it is imperative to think beyond violence as the primary measure of political inclusion. Armed groups that prey on local communities and commit serious human rights abuses should be disqualified as negotiating partners. By contrast, some rebels provide some measure of order or even public goods such as security and they should therefore receive a political premium in negotiations. For they come at least close to carry out functions that the government in the making is supposed to fulfil. Needless to say, efforts to promote accountability and legitimacy in the field of conflict resolution will not prevent violent entrepreneurs from conquering state power but it is at least a step to limit the lawlessness and impunity that characterises insurgency-affected countries and which, by and large, often continues

⁶⁶ Amos Sawyer, ‘Violent Conflicts and Governance Challenges in West Africa: The Case of the Mano River Basin Area’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* **42**, 4 (2004), p. 451; Adekeye, Adebajo, ‘Liberia: A Warlord’s Peace’, in Stedman, Rothchild, Cousens, *Ending Civil Wars*, pp. 599-630.

to reign long after the official end of the war. One way to promote accountability even during conflicts would be the institutionalisation of criminal investigations to be undertaken by internationally sanctioned juridical bodies (e.g. special courts such as in Sierra Leone, the International Criminal Court in the case of the DR Congo) in the wake or even amidst every internal conflict.⁶⁷ Hanging like the sword of Damocles over all warring parties, the threat of criminal investigations may help to restrain the worst abuses. It should send a signal to would-be leaders that raw power is not sufficient to gain international recognition as stakeholders in national power struggles. For if they are unable or unwilling to live up to certain standards, it is safe to assume that they will be unlikely to play a constructive part in the post-conflict period – even more so since the current mechanistic and reflexive use of power-sharing only rarely addresses the root causes of internal wars.

All of this does not release Western actors of the necessity to more generally rethink their policies towards Africa and, at last, to step up efforts to put the rhetoric of conflict prevention into practice. In light of both the poor record of conflict resolution as well as post-conflict peace-building, where significant resources and energy are ineptly used and, perhaps worse, invested only after the fact this should be an urgent task.⁶⁸ Should the hypothesis presented in this paper be valid, power-sharing agreements are not the place to start. There is a need to ‘bring democracy back in’ or at least a framework for mutually acceptable ways to access power. Governments and civilian opposition parties should get a clear credit for respecting accepted rules and

⁶⁷ Andrew Rigby, *Justice and Reconciliation: After the Violence*, (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2001); Jacquie Cassette, ‘Towards Justice in the Wake of Armed Conflicts? The Evolution of War Crimes Tribunals’, *African Security Review*, **9**, 5/6 (2000) [<http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/ASR/9No5And6/Cassette.html>]

⁶⁸ Paris, *At War’s End*; Marina Ottaway, ‘Rebuilding State Institutions in Collapsed States’, *Development and Change*, **33**, 5 (2002), pp. 1001-1023; ‘Liberia: A Shattered Nation on a Long Road to Recovery’, *IRIN News*, 24 August 2004.

not for bending them. This holds for intrusive neighbours too. A less technical (and more politically-informed) Western approach to promote political accountability in the fields of election monitoring, democracy assistance and administrative reform beyond the capitals would be helpful in this regard.