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# THE HIDDEN COSTS OF POWER-SHARING: REPRODUCING INSURGENT VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

DENIS M. TULL AND ANDREAS MEHLER

## ABSTRACT

This article analyzes some factors underlying the spread of insurgent violence in Africa. It focuses on the impact external factors have on power struggles on the continent. The first of these is the unsteady support for democracy from Western donors, which has impeded more far-reaching domestic changes in much of Africa. Second are wider changes in the international setting that dramatically enhanced the international standing of armed movements in the post-1989 period. The article argues that the interplay of both factors has induced would-be leaders to conquer state power by violent rather than non-violent means. This becomes particularly evident in regard to Western efforts to solve violent conflict through power-sharing agreements. The hypothesis is put forward that the institutionalization of this practice for the sake of ‘peace’, i.e. providing rebels with a share of state power, has important demonstration effects across the continent. It creates an incentive structure would-be leaders can seize upon by embarking on the insurgent path as well. As a result, and irrespective of their effectiveness in any given case, power-sharing agreements may contribute to the reproduction of insurgent violence.

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SINCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR INSURGENCIES HAVE DOMINATED the range of violent conflicts in West and central Africa and have become a critical element in rapid social change in most of the continent’s sub-regions. Aside from their quantitative expansion, the significance of insurrections is also noteworthy at the qualitative level. For one thing, vast stretches of Africa have been ‘governed’ by insurgency movements for sustained periods and, more important for the purpose of this article, 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 both Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), two successive governments were either displaced by insurgents or were forced to share power with their rebel foes.

The steady recurrence of insurrections in a number of countries, as well as their increasingly frequent inclusion into governments, thus seems to

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indicate that would-be leaders have some reason to conceptualize the organization of violence as a viable path to occupying at least parcels of state power. Taking this assumption as a starting point, this article aims to explore 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 analyzing the root causes of rebellion, it probes contextual factors that bear on the rationale of politically ambitious leaders to start insurgency warfare.

To date, careful analysis of the significance of the insurgency phenomenon has been an exception.<sup>1</sup> Arguably, this is to some extent due to the deeply rooted tradition of state-centred analysis in political science and its sub-disciplines.<sup>2</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, the weakening of state capabilities has been identified as a major explanatory factor of high levels of internal conflict and insurrection in Africa.<sup>3</sup> It is beyond doubt that the limited military capacities of many African states lower the costs of forming successful insurgencies. Other commentators have emphasized economic aspects, notably the availability of natural resources as a facilitating factor helping to set up and sustain insurrections.<sup>4</sup> While both factors are important, we argue that an analysis of insurgency-related conflicts in Africa is incomplete without taking into consideration external factors relating 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 in organizing violence.

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, they were included in 'governments of national unity'. We argue that the institutionalization of this practice demonstrates Western willingness to provide political pay-offs for insurgent violence and thereby 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 impli-

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

2. Douglas Lemke, 'African lessons for international relations theory', *World Politics* 56 (2003), pp. 114–38.

3. Jeffrey Herbst and Greg Mills, *The Future of Africa: A new order in sight?* Adelphi Paper 361. (International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, 2003), p. 40; Crawford Young, 'The end of the post-colonial state in Africa? Reflections on changing African political dynamics', *African Affairs* 103, 410 (2004), pp. 43–6.

4. Among a growing body of literature, still most frequently quoted is Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, *Greed and Grievance in Civil War* (World Bank, Washington, DC, 2001); equally burgeoning are the critiques, e.g., Chris Cramer, 'Homo economicus goes to war: methodological individualism, rational choice and the political economy of war', *World Development* 30, 11 (2003), pp. 1845–64.

cations for the policies of Western governments towards Africa and their stated objective of conflict prevention.

The first section of the article briefly sketches the trajectory of the biggest insurgency movement of the Congo war, the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD), which will illustrate how the current debate on greed and grievance neglects the extent to which the strategies of insurgencies are significantly shaped by the international environment and strategies of extraversion. Section two addresses the political inconsistencies of Western political engagement in Africa. We shall argue that parts of the profound political malaise in much of the continent stem from the ambiguous stance that the West has adopted in regard to both democracy assistance and conflict resolution. We examine the extent to which these policies have contributed to ever-more violent politics on the continent. As we shall analyze in the third section, these inconsistencies have pushed some African countries into a vicious cycle that corroborates the reproduction of insurgency-induced violence. We develop the hypothesis that the West's preferred instrument of conflict resolution — power-sharing agreements — turns 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 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*

In spite of military support from Namibia, Angola and Zimbabwe, the government of President Laurent Kabila proved unable to crush 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, the envisaged outcome of which was a 'new political order' for the Congo. This so-called inter-congolese dialogue was based on the principle that all the participants in the negotiations 'shall enjoy equal status'.<sup>5</sup> After significant delays, and the emergence of further 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 shall offer a broad sketch of the RCD rebellion, its leadership and objectives and its interplay with the international arena.

For a start, it seems difficult to categorize the RCD in terms of either ideology or greed. In regard to ideology, for example, the RCD leadership

5. Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, Annex A, Chapter 5, Arts 5.1 and 5.2.b. available at [http://www.usip.org/library/pa/drc/drc\\_07101999\\_toc.html](http://www.usip.org/library/pa/drc/drc_07101999_toc.html)

was far too heterogeneous to patch together a coherent political programme. Much like its forerunner, Kabila's *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération* (AFDL), it was a 'coalition of convenience'<sup>6</sup> that contained some strange bedfellows. Roughly speaking, the RCD was composed of four groups: first, former AFDL lieutenants of Rwandophone origin from the Kivus, including Moïse Nyarugabo, Bizima Kahara and Azarias Ruberwa. Former followers of the late President Mobutu, notably Alexis Thambwe and Lunda Bululu, made up a second group. A third component of the initial nucleus was constituted by some well-known academics and professionals such as Professor Ernest Wamba dia Wamba and former United Nations (UNESCO) official Z'ahidi Ngoma. The inclusion of these personalities was arguably meant to provide the RCD with internationally renowned figureheads in an effort to shield it from the predictable accusation of being a foreign proxy. A fourth group consisted of various individuals disappointed or marginalized by Kabila, including Emile Ilunga and Joseph Mudumbi, among others.<sup>7</sup>

Given the heterogeneity of the movement's initial leadership, and the well-known disgust its leading intellectuals (Wamba, Ngoma) harboured for former 'Mobutists', some of whom were to become RCD founding members, it seems almost inconceivable that this motley crew of would-be insurgents could have assembled without the impetus of a third party's hidden hand, i.e. Rwanda and Uganda. It was Rwanda that provided the RCD leaders with an opportunity to conquer state power.

The story of the RCD seems to underscore Clapham's suggestion that 'insurgencies derive basically from blocked political aspirations'.<sup>8</sup> Contrary to their foot soldiers, contemporary rebel leaders, at least in the DRC, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Republic of Congo, are no social outcasts. Instead, they are a manifestation of 'elite-recycling', a term introduced to describe the limited renewal of political elites in the context of the post-1990 democratization period. Virtually all RCD leaders had served formerly in senior government positions under Mobutu and Kabila and were therefore members of the political establishment.<sup>9</sup> As such, they did not fight to address societal grievances but in order to reintegrate themselves 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.

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.

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

9. A point also made by William Reno, 'The politics of insurgency in collapsing states', *Development and Change* 33, 5 (2002), pp. 841f.

What is more, their strategies are firmly rooted in well-established postcolonial political practices such as clientelism.

The RCD's poor record of governance in the territories under its control underscores the lack of an agenda for political renewal.<sup>10</sup> 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 of imposing its security interests was 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.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps inevitably, the resulting lack of Congolese political ownership of the insurrection was an obstacle to the RCD building up a measure of political credibility, let alone fostering 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 with its Rwandan god-fathers 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 has played a powerful role in extending and exacerbating the war in the DRC,<sup>12</sup> it is much more difficult to maintain that greed was the primary motive of the RCD. To be sure, RCD elites did seize 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 UN Panel of Experts observed with regard to 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'.<sup>13</sup> 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

10. Denis M. Tull, 'The reconfiguration of political order in Africa: a case study from North Kivu (DR Congo)', (Institute of African Affairs, Hamburg, 2005), chap. 3–5.

11. International Crisis Group, *The Kivus: The forgotten crucible of the Congo conflict* (IGG, Brussels/Nairobi, 2003), pp. 14–22; De Villers et al., *Guerre et politique*, pp. 65–76.

12. 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* (UN, New York, 2002).

13. *Ibid.*, para. 78.

of December 2002.<sup>14</sup> This objective was, of course, linked to the perspective of acquiring resources deriving from sovereignty,<sup>15</sup> 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'.<sup>16</sup> 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 its 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. Furthermore, 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 leaders did not ignore local hostility towards their movement, but they had few incentives to mend this state of affairs.<sup>17</sup> Once the military deadlock 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, in addition to the use of violence as a bargaining chip, the second factor facilitating insurgents' access to state power is international recognition. As we shall explain in the following section, the West'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 formal international recognition that either provides diplomatic support at the expense of internationally marginalized incumbents or facilitates their inclusion in externally brokered power-sharing governments. Frequently, the energy invested by insurgents in warfare is only matched by diplomatic efforts, thereby pushing domestic political agendas even further into the background.

The RCD's preoccupation with international recognition as a legitimate contender for Congolese state power was arguably the very reason why intellectuals like Wamba were granted formal leadership of the movement. Mimicking other insurgents, the RCD hired lobbying firms to represent its interests in Washington.<sup>18</sup> Valuable help came from President Kabila himself, whose erratic rule and close relations with so-called rogue states like

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

15. Pierre Englebert, *Why Congo Persists: Sovereignty, globalization, and the violent reproduction of a weak state* Queen Elizabeth House Working Paper No. 95 (Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford, 2003).

16. 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](http://www.fes.de/ipg/IPG2_2003/ZEITSCHRIFTE.HTM)]

17. We do not find Mkandawire's explanation for this, e.g. the urban malaise, compelling, not least because a good number of the most violent acts by rebel movements have 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.

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

Libya and North Korea had compromised him in Western eyes. Consequently, the RCD justifiably regarded Kabila 'as its best asset'.<sup>19</sup>

Not only in Africa did the RCD make rapid diplomatic inroads, hailed by Vice-President Ngoma as 'the start of recognition'<sup>20</sup>; 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.<sup>21</sup> 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's strained relations with the RCD's Rwandan backers]. Of course, we are label[le]d 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'.<sup>22</sup>

Ngoma's comments are remarkable for their 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, the 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.<sup>23</sup> Given past diplomatic practices, the talks in Kigali were a spectacular act of recognition. They underlined how shifting international conventions benefit insurgencies, whereas incumbent governments are no longer the privileged, let alone sole interlocutors of outside powers.

#### *Democracy assistance and conflict management*

The ambiguities of Western engagement in sub-Saharan Africa and even the lack of clear political strategies 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

19. 'Entrenched and overstretched', *Africa Confidential*, 9 October 1998.

20. 'African foreign ministers meet rebel leaders in Goma', *BBC Monitoring*, 20 August 1998.

21. See the following *BBC Monitoring* reports: 'Rebel leader says Kabila selling off the national heritage', 2 October 1998; 'Ministers, rebel counterpart speaks to Belgian paper about health situation', 6 October 1998; 'Rebel leader leads delegation to Washington', 19 October 1998.

22. 'Rebel leader Ngoma praises French, Western stance on rebellion', *BBC Monitoring*, 20 August 1998.

23. 'US envoy Susan Rice holds talks in Rwanda with DR Congo rebels', *BBC Monitoring*, 6 November 1998.



supported democratic reforms and embraced liberal political reform as a force for change on the continent. However, as Clapham and Wiseman correctly predicted in 1995, Western pressure for democratization was bound to be ephemeral.<sup>24</sup> Except for a few egregious cases of foul play, Western countries showed little inclination to penalize reform-resistant governments in one way or another. In the former Zaire, for example, the period of political liberalization (1990–96) proved a frustrating exercise for the opposition. President Mobutu created dozens of *partis alimentaires* to undermine an already fragmented opposition. Although donors suspended development aid, initial Western support for the democracy movement faltered the longer the domestic power struggle endured.

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 bore little relation to their system of government.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> What is more, reform-minded states received scant reward for undertaking comparatively extensive democratic engineering, and the quality of democratic governance had no measurable impact on aid levels.<sup>27</sup> Hence, the paradigm of political conditionality that many Western countries embraced as a determinant factor of aid allocation was more rhetorical than actual.

Ultimately, the battleground for international respectability 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 circumscribed the overall freedom of political choice in many African countries. Western actors revealed a strong unwillingness or inability to tackle these deeply ingrained patterns of political behaviour and the concomitant fraudulent electioneering.<sup>28</sup> As a consequence, past and present incumbents find it fairly easy to satisfy demands for more appropriate electoral procedures, while the defeat of the opposition is in many instances a foregone conclusion.<sup>29</sup>

24. Christopher Clapham and 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.

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

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

27. Van de Walle, *African Economies*, pp. 268f.

28. See, for example, Richard Sandbrook, *Closing the Circle: Democratization and development in Africa* (Zed Books, London, 2000), pp. 26–32.

29. Although useful recommendations were formulated by experts: see Timothy D. Sisk, 'Elections and conflict managements in Africa: conclusions and recommendations', in Timothy D. Sisk and Andrew Reynolds (eds), *Elections and Conflict Management in Africa* (US Institute for Peace, Washington, DC, 1998), pp. 145–71.

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 on grounds of 'dubious nationality'). Such techniques as blocking opposition access to the media and the massive use of state resources in favour of the incumbent may no longer go unnoticed, as the final statements of electoral monitoring bodies routinely point to serious irregularities. But outsiders equally routinely affirm that the elections represent a major step forward in the direction of democracy. Even in instances where severe criticism was issued, 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. Many African governments with poor democratic credentials are thus able to maintain international respectability and, hence, a continued aid flow.

In summary, the third wave of democratization produced few tangible changes in the rules of the political game. Perhaps worse, the seal of international legitimacy that incumbent front-runners 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 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, a factor that may to some extent explain why public opinion about democracy remains fairly volatile.<sup>30</sup> In a considerable number of African countries, one witnesses the rise of so-called illiberal democracies, a euphemism for electoral autocracies, where effective opportunities for electoral change are simply non-existent.<sup>31</sup>

A variety of reasons explain Western reluctance to challenge bad old habits in electoral autocracies. One of them is the belief that added pressure on incumbents may prove counterproductive. According to this view, strict enforcement of political conditionality may further destabilize fragile polities and potentially fuel violence by contenders. Keeping the lid on African countries by tacitly supporting incumbent governments may not

30. In a briefing paper by Afrobarometer (*Democracy and Electoral Alternation: Evolving African attitudes*, April 2004), 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>.

31. There were ten democracies in Africa in 2002. See Monty G. Marshall and Ted Gurr, *Peace and Conflict 2003: A global survey of armed conflicts, self-determination movements, and democracy* (College Park, University of Maryland, MD, 2003), p. 25.

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 calculations of would-be leaders who 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 that they are fighting a futile political battle.

The ambivalent stance of Western governments toward democratization and the perceived impossibility of opposition groups securing election to office sends powerful signals. Not mincing his words, Jean-François Bayart has accused the European Union and its member states of having

... 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 paracolony or proto-colony type by some Sub-Saharan states.<sup>32</sup>

The recent developments in Côte d'Ivoire seem to confirm this observation.<sup>33</sup> Throughout the 1990s, the opposition parties *Front populaire ivoirien* (FPI) and *Rassemblement démocratique républicain* (RDR) were 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.<sup>34</sup> France's rhetoric of democracy bonuses and political conditionality in the wake of President Mitterrand's 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 opposition parties were allegedly preparing their own coups d'état, indicating that recourse to violence was already an instrument that both parties were contemplating – unsurprisingly.<sup>35</sup>

In early 2000 the FPI and the RDR were represented in the transitional government of the coup leader General Guéï, certainly as a recognition of their political weight, but perhaps also of their 'spoiling capacities'. Subsequently the RDR was excluded from government and its leader, Alassane Ouattara, was barred from standing as a candidate in the 2000 presidential elections. Rumours circulated of coup preparations by military officers

32. Jean-François Bayart, 'Commentary: towards a new start for Africa and Europe', *African Affairs* 103, 412 (2004), p. 456.

33. 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 French involvement see especially Stephen Smith, 'La politique d'engagement de la France à l'épreuve de la Côte d'Ivoire', *Politique Africaine* 89 (2003), pp. 112–26.

34. One of the present 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, for example, 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.

35. Source: interviews in Abidjan, February 2000.

close to the RDR, and the polarization of the country's political system set the stage for further political violence.

A second aspect of the involuntary involvement of external actors, or rather their inaction, is important. The government in Côte d'Ivoire did not have substantial defence capacities by the end of the 1990s. The national army was always less important for the security of the regime than the presence of French troops. This meant that necessary investments in the national army or the gendarmerie were never made.<sup>36</sup> The coincidence of France's relative disengagement — in Africa as a whole and in Côte d'Ivoire in particular — and the deep internal crisis proved to be an important factor aggravating the conflict: the hasty recruitment of young soldiers, sometimes informally, led to the creation of uncontrollable units and to a less discriminate use of violence in the period between 2000 and 2002. The September 2002 rebellion met little resistance by the security forces and only a late and half-hearted 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 the finding that states undergoing transition, i.e. states governed by hybrid regimes, are six times more likely than democracies and two and a half times more likely than autocracies to witness outbreaks of societal wars.<sup>37</sup> Needless to say, this does not establish a causal relationship between Western ambivalence towards (flawed) democratization processes, on the one hand, and the rise of insurgency movements, 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 experiments in democratization as, for example, the cases of Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville or the DRC suggest.

As a result, most Western governments and organizations shifted their priorities in Africa from support of democracy to the fields of conflict prevention, conflict management or back to Cold war-type notions of 'stability' in the course of the 1990s.<sup>38</sup> Still Africa remains the continent with the

36. 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 déclassement', *Politique Africaine* 78 (2000), pp. 26–44. See also the anonymous article (CDG), 'L'armée ivoirienne: de la marginalisation à la prise du pouvoir', *Afrique Contemporaine* 193 (2000), pp. 9–12.

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

38. For the case of the European Union, see Gorm Rye Olsen, 'Promoting democracy, preventing conflict: the European Union and Africa', *International Politics* 39 (2002), pp. 311–28.

highest incidence of violent conflict. Even though the responsibility for this disturbing fact should not be attributed solely to outside actors, it remains nonetheless true that the foreign policies of Western countries continue to have an appreciable impact on political processes on the continent. What explains the high numbers of conflicts, in spite of the purported attempts of the West to solve or even prevent them? As already noted, inconsistent support for democracy is one possible explanation for this outcome. Furthermore, 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, reactive decision-making remains as salient 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.'<sup>39</sup>

Western attempts at resolving ongoing conflicts are characterized by limited engagement. Confronted with increasingly effective pressure from the media and international human rights groups to 'do something', standing back and letting conflicts run their course is not an option which Western governments can easily contemplate.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, the West is demonstrating an obvious reluctance to be sucked in to 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 consequentiality.

This reactive behaviour has typically taken the form of power-sharing agreements between embattled governments and insurgencies.<sup>41</sup> A specific instrument of conflict mediation, power-sharing agreements are usually brokered in stalled conflicts where neither side has the military clout to decisively defeat the other. They include the negotiating of a peace settlement between incumbents and rebels that provides for the partition of power within a government of national unity. This is followed by provisions for a political transition whose end-point is multiparty elections. Peace settlements are often accompanied by the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping mission to support the transition. The logic of power-sharing rests on the assumption that the accommodation of the

39. Herbst and Mills, 'The future of Africa', p. 40.

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

41. Ian S. Spears, 'Understanding inclusive peace agreements in Africa: the problems of sharing power', *Third World Quarterly* 21, 1 (2000), pp. 105–18.

demands of anti-regime movements has the potential to demilitarize 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'.<sup>42</sup>

To date, the record of power-sharing agreements appears to be mixed at best, not least because international mediators have assumed that their job is all but finished with the signing ceremony of peace accords.<sup>43</sup> This article cannot offer a critical survey of the effectiveness of internationally brokered power-sharing agreements in regard to the restoration of peace. Rather, it seeks to outline some of the fallacies and unintended consequences that outsiders' promotion of power-sharing as a general practice of peacemaking may unfold. We shall start with an overview of the changed international context in which contemporary insurgents are operating.

### *Conquest by power-sharing*

The role of insurgency movements in world politics underwent dramatic changes in the post Cold War-period, enhancing their international standing.<sup>44</sup> Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, the super-powers regarded insurgency movements as useful instruments to wage proxy battles in many parts of the southern hemisphere. While strategic interests therefore lent international weight to rebel groups, the exigencies of a bipolar international system and international conventions still put a premium on the incumbent government of a sovereign state. Since even Cold War competition was framed by juridical sovereignty, external support for insurgents faced certain limits, and state rulers — those controlling the capital — were clearly in an advantageous position. Their incumbent status guaranteed an access to outside resources (military, economic, diplomatic) far superior to those available to their rebel challengers.

These mechanisms have undergone a major shift since the end of the Cold War, even as the 'negative sovereignty' associated with Third World polities continues 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.

42. Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, 'Institutionalizing peace: power sharing and post-civil war conflict management', *American Journal of Political Science* 47, 2 (2003), p. 318.

43. See Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild and Elizabeth M. Cousens (eds), *Ending Civil Wars: The implementation of peace agreements* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO, 2002); Timothy D. Sisk, *Peacemaking in Civil Wars: Obstacles, options, and opportunities* Occasional Paper (The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, South Bend, IL, 2001); Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building peace after civil war* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004).

44. The introduction to this section relies heavily on Christopher Clapham's work. See his *Africa and the International System* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996), chap. 9, and 'Degrees of statehood', *Review of International Studies* 24 (1998), pp. 143–57.

The imposition of economic conditionalities by Western governments and the international financial institutions as well as their increasing collaboration with non-state actors (primarily NGOs), indeed the sidelining of the state, notably in the field of 'development', presents a vivid illustration of this change.<sup>45</sup>

The most spectacular marker of this shift relates to international attitudes towards insurgency movements since 1989. As a rule, their international status reached even higher levels over the last decade or so, but this rise occurred for reasons that differed greatly from those factors that underpinned the importance of rebel movements during the Cold War era. Since internal conflicts were no longer defined as a function of superpower competition, the *raison d'être* of waging proxy wars was no longer clear. Rather than seeking to win insurgency/civil wars (over the incumbent government allied with the rival superpower), outsiders, and Western states in particular, espoused at least a rhetorical commitment to bringing internal wars to an end.

A sharp decline of vital interests and changes at the international level, the domestic level, or sometimes both (for example, France), was accompanied by the rolling back of 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. As a result, the very same reasons that inclined outside powers to abjure fighting proxy wars also meant that strong political engagement to prevent and solve violent conflict in Africa was unlikely. This development signalled an important departure from previous external attitudes, to the extent that incumbents no longer enjoyed solid access to outside support and hence guarantees of political survival, even on judicial grounds such as incumbency or sovereignty which had given them a distinct advantage in the Cold War context. Conversely, armed non-state movements were more readily integrated into the international relations of sovereign states as outsiders attempted to solve violent conflict in war-torn countries. Because of limited interests, Western actors turned to the instrument of power-sharing to terminate the fighting, an approach that requires by definition the recognition of all the warring parties, including the insurgents. Thus, it entails a major adjustment 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

45. Firoze Manji and Carl O'Coill, 'The missionary position: NGOs and development in Africa', *International Affairs* 78, 3 (2002), pp. 578–80.

claim . . . to represent the state, but rather to achieve a political settlement through recognition of all the competing parties.<sup>46</sup>

This is not to say that outsiders were always willing to engage with insurgents on political terms and that power-sharing was in every instance a foregone conclusion. However, it is significant that the neighbouring countries of insurgency-affected countries in Africa often showed more hostility towards insurgencies than the Western-led international community. Such cases include, for example, the military interventions of Senegal in Guinea-Bissau (1998) and the joint intervention by South Africa and Botswana in Lesotho (1998). These interferences were driven by concerns about political and economic instability in their immediate neighbourhood (Lesotho), the imminent displacement of friendly regimes by insurgents suspected of supporting rebels in the intervening country (insurgent General Mane and the Casamançais rebels in Guinea-Bissau/Senegal) and, last but not least, the prospect of a presumed easy military victory over the insurgencies.

In another set of cases, sub-regional responses were less resolute. In Liberia, the Economic Community of West African States peacekeeping force ECOMOG prevented Charles Taylor's military victory in 1990 but showed little inclination to give President Doe decisive support. Even less help came from Doe's former key ally, the United States. Given its sharp drop of interests in Liberia after 1989, it did no more than evacuate its residents from Monrovia although the deployment of 2,000 Marines had created other expectations.<sup>47</sup> After a dozen unsuccessful attempts to broker a peace settlement, the Abuja accords ushered in a transitional arrangement.

Very similar responses occurred in Sierra Leone. First, the international community refused to recognize the Koroma regime that had overthrown President Kabbah in May 1997. Likewise, ECOMOG troops dislodged the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) insurgents from Freetown in January 1999. Even so, the Nigerian government was unwilling to extend the presence of its ECOMOG troops in the country after the 1999 Nigerian elections, although it was commonly known that the RUF was not a spent force. Nigeria as well as the US urged Kabbah to negotiate with the rebels, a move that resulted in the Lomé agreement.<sup>48</sup>

The insurrection that toppled President Patassé in the Central African Republic in 2003 was condemned by the African Union but was quickly recognized by the *Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale* (CEMAC). The French (technical) support for the CEMAC peacekeepers who did not intervene to save Patassé was a clear indication that the rebels

46. Clapham, 'Degrees of statehood', p. 153.

47. Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war* (Hurst & Co, London, 1999), p. 4.

48. William Reno, 'The failure of peacekeeping in Sierra Leone', *Current History* (May 2001), pp. 220f.



of former chief of staff François Bozizé had secured the necessary degree of outside support. France's military intervention in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002 was characterized by similar ambiguities. Paris prevented the military victory of the insurgency, but it refused to take sides with the Gbagbo government.

The 'containment approach' to internal conflicts requires not only external recognition of insurgents. By putting a premium on violence, it also leaves civilian opposition parties in an uneasy position. Irrespective of their participation in negotiations, they are either forced to take a pro-government position (and risk being dealt with as a negligible partner) or a pro-rebellion position (exposing themselves to all sorts of accusations).<sup>49</sup>

From the perspective of the West, the only way to overcome the conundrum of limited interests and the urge 'to do something' has been a low-key engagement, whereby militarily effective insurrections are conceived of as legitimate stakeholders in domestic power struggles. Regardless of their often appalling human rights record, their power warrants international consideration.

Perhaps the most infamous case is that of the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, who were incorporated into a government of national unity following the July 1999 Lomé peace agreement. Similar processes are currently taking place in Burundi, where Western actors continue to press for inclusive peace talks at any cost. Most recently, and disturbingly so, the European Union allegedly continued to urge the *Forces nationales de libération* (FNL) to join peace talks even in the immediate wake of the assault on a refugee camp in August 2004 which left some 160 people dead and for which the FNL had claimed responsibility.<sup>50</sup>

Early and recurrent examples of 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 illustrations of violent rent-seeking, inasmuch as the change from civilian party agent to rebel leader (and back again) is common. Both of the country's most prominent politicians — President Idriss Déby and the chairman of the National Assembly, 'General' Abdelkader Kamougué — were at one point 're-civilized' warlords. The two rebel movements, *Comité de sursaut national pour la paix et la démocratie* (under Moïse Ketté) and its offspring, the *Forces armées pour la république fédérale*, were recognized as political parties in 1994 and 1998.<sup>51</sup> Ketté enjoyed ministerial rank before

49. 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 causes of the conflict 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).

50. 'UN weighs situation in Burundi following massacre', *Reuters*, 15 August 2004. On the Burundian peace process, see the reporting of the International Crisis Group.

51. 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.

slipping out of the sinecure system and founding a new rebel movement (before being murdered in 2001). This is the purest form of politico-military entrepreneurship in that it entails blackmailing sinecures by military means.

Strategies of shifting from peaceful to violent opposition (and back again) can be very helpful to prove a certain nuisance capacity as the basis for attracting rents of violence, namely inclusion in government. The complement for lower ranks is the forcing of material rewards in the framework of demobilization programmes.<sup>52</sup> The bill is usually paid by some donor organizations 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 simply to reward them.

By the same token, the three mutinies (1996–97) in the Central African Republic can be partly explained by the ‘rents of violence’ syndrome. The crisis was temporarily ended by forming a coalition government including all political camps and the rebels. Former heads of state and chairmen of political parties Dacko and Kolingba received substantial state pensions — inducements to renounce violence after threatening to use it.<sup>53</sup> In a country where recurrent budgetary aid, mainly from France, is necessary to pay part of the salary arrears in the civil service (at one point peaking at 29 months of unpaid salaries), this arrangement amounted to a foreign-sponsored subvention for these 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 somewhat tacit pressure for democratization beyond the level of electoral procedures and, second, to the international recognition of insurgency movements, to the detriment of embattled governments of weak states and of 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. The relationship we hypothesize between flawed democracy and violent conflict is that the road to state power in electoral autocracies is usually closed to non-violent political actors. The struggle for access to state power by opposition politicians, often pursued at great personal risk, cannot pay off. At the same time, opposition politicians and other would-be leaders observe radically different responses from Western governments to violent political action in insurgency-affected

52. See, for example, Mike Crawley, ‘Fewer guns, but tensions persist in Liberia’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 28 October 2004.

53. 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.

countries, where strongmen embarking on the rebel path impose themselves by establishing political facts which the West is usually willing to accept. Western buy-in tactics to engage militarily effective insurgencies and to accommodate their demands by advocating their incorporation into national governments for the sake of 'peace' amount to an incentive to have recourse to violence to conquer state power, or at least to receive a seat at the bargaining table.<sup>54</sup> 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.

As a result, the behaviour of would-be leaders turned insurgents is partly a response to incentive structures that outside actors are unwittingly establishing. This is part of the extraversion strategies used to assert new claims on resources and to authority which are far from being the privileged domain of state rulers.<sup>55</sup> This observation suggests that the hypothesized relationship between the insurgent path and Western engagement with violent non-state actors is far from speculative. What could provide more compelling evidence than the fact that insurgents go to great length to set up and maintain international relations with foreign governments, international NGOs and transnational actors?<sup>56</sup> Should the hypothesis concerning the interplay between external incentives and insurgent violence be valid, it reflects a troubling political development that bodes ill for the prevention of conflicts in Africa.

Beyond the demonstration effects individual cases 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* war-torn countries. First, some faction leaders taking part in negotiations seem barely interested in achieving conclusive agreements. Rather, they participate in seemingly endless negotiations for the sake of material benefits, most notably in Somalia, where the most powerful leaders of armed groups have held peace talks for many years even though the resurrection of a Somalian state is clearly not in their interest.<sup>57</sup> Second, even where political settlements are achieved, any chance to return to some degree of normality seems to be remote. Power-sharing formulas allow many rebel leaders to behave in office much as in wartime (i.e. Sankoh, Taylor), thus tapping the

54. Reno, 'The failure of peacekeeping'.

55. Robert Latham, Ronald Kassimir and Thomas M. Callaghy, 'Introduction: transboundary formations, intervention, order, and authority', in Thomas M. Callaghy, Ronald Kassimir, Robert Latham (eds), *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), p.13; Jean-François Bayart, 'Africa in the world: a history of extraversion', *African Affairs* 99, 395 (2000), pp. 217–67.

56. See Clifford Bob, 'Marketing rebellion: insurgent groups, international media, and NGO support', *International Politics* 38 (2001), pp. 311–34.

57. Martin Doornbos, 'State collapse and fresh starts: some critical reflections', *Development and Change* 33, 5 (2002), p. 807.

combined revenues deriving from peace and sovereignty rents as well as war economies.

Third, 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. Fourth, the notion of inclusion that underpins the concept of power-sharing runs the risk of generating ever more insurgent groups that are not included in any given settlement. Again, the Congo war and the trajectory of the RCD insurgency are revealing in this regard, for the Lusaka accord conveyed a powerful and unanimous message to some parties to the conflict. While insurgencies may be prone to defections, it is no coincidence that as soon as the political terms of Lusaka (power-sharing, transitional government) had been established, the defections from the RCD 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, striving 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 treated accordingly by the mediators; indeed, this was the very reason the new rebel groups were created.<sup>58</sup> By sticking to the principle of *inclusive* negotiations for the sake of peace, the mediators were confronted with the problem of accommodating the demands of an ever growing number of factions. In the end, protracted discussions were required to decide whether and how the new factions should be included. 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 accords.

### *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. Intended to discourage army officers from staging coups d'état, such laudable discourses now seem to be outdated, to the extent that violence remains an effective instrument to access state power in Africa which is

58. A similar point is made by Kidane Mengisteab, 'Africa's intrastate conflicts: relevance and limitations of diplomacy', *African Issues* 32 (2004), pp. 37f.

subsequently legitimized by external actors in their hapless attempts to limit the damage.<sup>59</sup>

It is our conclusion that external efforts to terminate internal warfare may be as much part of the problem as they are part of the solution. 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.<sup>60</sup> This is so because the indiscriminate use of power-sharing agreements as an instrument of peace-making brings unintended but potentially dangerous consequences. The institutionalization 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'. 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. Neglecting this contextual dimension carries the risk of unnuanced 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.

As a result, outside actors keen to resolve violent internal conflicts in Africa face a profound dilemma. To overcome it, two rather bold solutions come to mind: first, let conflicts run their course; second, always provide support (diplomatically, militarily) to incumbent regimes attacked by insurgents. The first one 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.<sup>61</sup> One observer of the Ivorian crisis — even before the events of November 2004 — reiterated this reasoning in the following terms: 'Interposition, in this kind of case, is a guarantee for lasting crisis. [France] should have either crushed the rebellion or let it go on.'<sup>62</sup>

59. In accordance with its protocol, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decisively intervened to reverse the coup d'état in Togo and to re-establish the constitutional order in early 2005. Intriguingly, however, even before the results of the April elections were announced, the chairman of the African Union, Olusegun Obasanjo, convened a meeting between Faure Gnassingbé and opposition leader Gilchrist Olympio in Abuja in the vain hope to broker the formation of a government of national unity in Togo irrespective of the outcomes of the presidential polls.

60. On emergency assistance, see Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How aid can support peace or war* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO, 1999); on development aid, see Peter Uvin, *Aiding Violence: The development enterprise in Rwanda* (Kumarian Press, West Hartford, CT, 1998).

61. Edward N. Luttwak, 'Give war a chance', *Foreign Affairs* 78 (1999), pp. 36–44.

62. Quoted in 'Une crise test pour les relations France-Afrique', *Le Figaro*, 15 October 2004.

Although the logic underpinning Luttwak's argument is somewhat compelling, its limits 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 (for example, Angola, Sudan). Letting them 'bleed out' hardly passes for the truly humanitarian thing to do. Again invoking the recent case of Côte d'Ivoire, it is by no means a foregone conclusion that an eventual capture of Abidjan by the insurgents would have ended the war. As for providing exclusive support to incumbent governments, it is self-evident that such a policy will almost inevitably entrench autocratic regimes, in turn forestalling any chance of promoting positive political change.

Outside actors need to recognize that the short-term quelling of conflicts in the guise of power-sharing is not to be confounded with peace. In Sierra Leone as well as Liberia, for example, power-sharing agreements (Lomé and Abuja) resulted in each case in a disastrous and unsustainable 'warlord's peace' which triggered further insurgent violence.<sup>63</sup> Given the gross and systematic human rights abuses the rebels committed during the war, it was short-sighted to presume that they would change their attitudes once they were occupying government offices.

Since more conflicts will surely erupt and peace settlements in some form or another will invariably be brokered, we therefore put forward two proposals. First, external brokers need to raise the threshold which grants insurgents a place at the negotiating table. As such, it is imperative to think beyond violence as the primary measure of political inclusion. Armed groups preying on local communities and committing serious human rights abuses should be disqualified as negotiating partners. By contrast, some rebels provide some measure of order or even collective goods such as security, and they should therefore receive a political premium in negotiations, for they come at least close to carrying out functions that a government 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 they are at least a step to limiting the lawlessness and impunity that characterizes insurgency-affected countries even after the conflict is terminated. One way to promote accountability even during conflicts would be the institutionalization of criminal investigations to be undertaken by internationally sanctioned juridical bodies (for example, special courts such as in Sierra Leone; or the International Criminal Court in the case of the DR Congo) in the wake of or even amidst every internal

63. 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 *et al.*, *Ending Civil Wars*, pp. 599–630.

conflict.<sup>64</sup> The threat of internationally-backed criminal investigations against all warring parties may help to restrain the worst abuses. It should send a message 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.

All of this does not release Western actors from the necessity more generally to rethink their policies towards Africa. 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.<sup>65</sup> Power-sharing agreements are not the place to start. There is a need to bring democracy back in or at least to promote a framework for mutually acceptable ways to access power. Governments and civilian opposition parties should receive credit for respecting accepted rules and not for bending them. This holds for intrusive neighbours too. A less technical and more politically-informed Western approach to promoting accountability in the fields of the rule of law, election monitoring, democracy assistance and administrative reform would be helpful in this regard. The central dilemma of outsiders is not the degree to which they seem to exhibit too much willingness to engage with insurgents and too little determination to promote democratic politics on the continent. The key challenge is the development of a qualitative kind of political engagement that espouses a long-term vision surmounting the serious inconsistencies and even mutual contradictions that have, by and large, characterized Western approaches to conflict resolution and support for democracy.

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