# How multilateral development assistance triggered the conflict in Rwanda

REGINE ANDERSEN

ABSTRACT *Previous to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, multilateral development agencies promoted three different strategies in the country. These were economic structural adjustment programmes, the multiparty democratisation process and the peace negotiation and implementation process (in co-operation with the OAU). In this article, I propose that these three strategies had contradictory and mutually negating effects on each other, and that they in combination contributed to a weakening of the regime. The conclusion is that these strategies—despite the best intentions—triggered the conflict. The article ends with a discussion of lessons to learn with regard to the role of multilateral development agencies in crisis prevention.*

In April 1994 a conflict evolved into some of the most brutal massacres the world has ever seen. This occurred despite the presence of multilateral development aid organisations and banks, bilateral aid agencies and international NGOs, and after massive efforts at peace negotiation. Many researchers have analysed the events in order to find out how this could have happened and why the peace efforts failed, but so far only a few have focused on the role of development aid organisations during the period leading up to the outbreak of conflict. The most comprehensive contribution on this issue has been delivered by Uvin (1998), who highlighted the linkages of aid to the underlying structural dimensions of conflict in Rwandan society, and documented how aid organisations failed to take action as the human rights situation rapidly deteriorated in the years up to 1994. In addition to Uvin, Scherrer (1997) showed how development aid was used to finance the preparations for genocide in the same period. Among others, Klinghoffer (1998) documented how bilateral French and Belgian military aid was provided to Rwanda up to 1994 and the French even continued arming the interim government after recognising that genocide was taking place and after an embargo was imposed by the UN Security Council. From another angle, Chossudovsky (1996) and Storey (1999), among others, examined the effects of economic structural adjustment programmes on the conflict in Rwanda, in different ways concluding that the programmes indirectly influenced the conflict situation. Scherrer (1999) showed how the externally induced democratisation efforts of the early 1990s, under conditions of permanent emergency, led to the

*Regine Andersen is at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute, PO Box 326, N-1326 Lysaker, Norway.*

opposite of what was intended, as—without hindrance—they were exploited by racist extremists for launching and organising attacks against the ethnic minority in the country.

However, so far no one has systematically tried to analyse the different main strategies promoted by multilateral development organisations and banks in Rwanda up to 1994 with regard to their interrelations and the possible impacts of these interrelations on the conflict situation. That is the aim of this article.[1] The main strategies used by multilateral development agencies and banks in Rwanda pertained to economic structural adjustment, democratisation and peace, and they were largely followed up by bilateral donors. The underlying assumption of this article is that—because of the dominant role of development aid in Rwanda—these strategies may have had comprehensive impacts and deeply influenced the social and economic dynamics in the country. Thus, I assume that it is of crucial importance to understand how this influence was related to the dynamics leading up to the genocide.

After an introduction setting out the previous explanations of the conflict, I will put forward three propositions on the interrelated impacts of the main strategies promoted by multilateral development agencies and banks on the conflict situation. Evidence supporting the propositions will be provided and discussed as a basis for the conclusions. In the final section I will discuss general implications for the role of multilateral aid agencies with regard to crisis prevention.

## What made the unthinkable happen? Revisiting explanatory attempts

The course of events from 1990 and up to 1994 has been described and analysed by many scholars, and several attempts have been made to explain how the 1994 catastrophe in Rwanda could have happened (*inter alia* Destexhe, 1995; Prunier, 1995; Omaar & de Waal, 1995; Percival & Homer-Dixon, 1996; Uvin, 1996a,b, 1998; Sellström & Wohlgemuth, 1996; Adelman & Suhrke, 1996; Chossudovsky, 1996; Scherrer 1997, 1999; Klinghoffer, 1998; Storey, 1999). What most of them have in common is their rejection of any simple explanations for the genocide. A multitude of factors influenced the situation in different ways, leading to the escalation. These various explanations differ from each other with regard to the emphasis on the different factors and their causal links to each other.

Ethnic segregation and systematic racism—combined with a system of unconditional obedience to authority—had settled deeply in Rwandan society during the past 100–150 years. The dynamics of these processes were complex, and the scope of this article only allows pointing out some of the core aspects. Scherrer (1999: 12–13) has labelled the Genocide in Rwanda a 'crime of obedience' and emphasises that the extermination was facilitated by a totalitarian system, where 'for the first time in the history of human kind, a population played a direct, active, and massive part in a state-decreed act of genocide'. Prunier (1995) explained how the feudal structures before and under colonialism and the authoritarian rule under the first president of the republic (Kayibanda, 1962–1973) as well as the somewhat 'softened' authoritarian rule under the second

president (Habyarimana, 1973–94) contributed to the socialisation of obedience to authorities. Uvin (1998) documented how the massive development aid to the country during the second republic in general supported these structures, thus contributing to the further preservation of authoritarian rule. Authoritarian rule, combined with the deeply ingrained obedience to authority, were not direct reasons for the genocide, but paved the way for the ethnic manipulation that escalated in 1990–94. Important questions in this regard are the extent and way in which ethnicity may have contributed to the dynamics of the Rwandan conflict.

Ethnic segregation and racism had been rooted in the political system since colonial times (Prunier, 1995). After bloody revolts by the majority Hutu people against the politically dominant Tutsi minority in 1959, Hutu people came to power in the first elections in 1960. They continued the system of ethnic segregation and systematic racism, turning it the other way around—against the Tutsi. The most significant symbol of the ideological foundation on which this system was built were the identity cards with ethnic classification which were introduced in 1933 and required of all Rwandan citizens by all regimes up to 1994 (Sellström & Wohlgemuth, 1996: 27). Since independence, these identity cards have represented the formalisation of the Rwandan 'apartheid' against the Tutsi. The ethnic segregation led to several serious riots in the first years after independence, and thousands of Tutsi left the country in search of refuge. By 1990 there were about 600 000–700 000 exiled Rwandese Tutsi, mainly in neighbouring countries. Discrimination against the Tutsi during the rule of President Habyarimana was softened somewhat, as he guaranteed their security and imposed a 10% quota for Tutsi on jobs in the civil service and education. During his rule before 1990 there were no reported cases of ethnic violence, though there were instances of regional conflicts (Sellström & Wohlgemuth, 1996: 33). This is a strong indication that the cause of the genocide did not lie in the ethnic relations between the Hutu and Tutsi *per se*, as ethnicity was not really an item on the agenda in the years before the outbreak of civil war in 1990. Ethnic factors were, however, clearly exploited in the propaganda that manipulated the population to take an active part in the mass killings, and obedience was obviously an important factor explaining the dreadful success of this manipulation.

Some scholars (eg Chossudovsky, 1996; Percival & Homer-Dixon, 1996; Uvin, 1998; Storey, 1999) have discussed whether the economic malaise in Rwanda might have contributed to paving the way for the catastrophe—in partial combination with population pressure and scarcity of productive land resulting from environmental degradation and drought. Whereas Rwanda was widely known and admired by international donors as a successful non-communist *Entwicklungsdiktatur* (development dictatorship) from the mid-1970s, this situation gradually changed as the end of the 1980s approached. Coffee prices had decreased dramatically and, as coffee was a main export commodity, this had a major impact on the Rwandan economy: Rwanda's export earnings plummet by 50% between 1987 and 1991 (Sellström & Wohlgemuth, 1996: 20). Its external debts doubled between 1985 and 1989 and increased by another 34% between 1989 and 1992. In 1992 Rwanda's external debts amounted to US$804.3 million

(Chossudovsky 1996: 939). In addition several droughts reduced agricultural productivity, affecting subsistence and export volume—a situation which further exacerbated the country's economic performance, increased the hardship of people's daily lives and spurred social unrest. But whereas the situation was most precarious for the people in the southwest and south, the conflict actually started in the north and spread to the southwest and south with the movement of the northern militias (Percival & Homer-Dixon 1996: 282). It has also been documented that the Hutu had little incentive to respond to the economic structural adjustment policies on an ethnic basis, but that the economic hardship caused by these policies was exploited for the purpose of ethnic manipulation (Storey, 1999). Summing up, this elaboration weakens the evidence for a direct causal link between economic factors and the ensuing bloodshed.

Other scholars (eg Adelmann & Suhrke, 1996: 23) point out that the period of economic recession coincided with the democratisation wave following the end of the Cold War. The new donor conditionality, which insisted on multiparty democratic systems, made rapid inroads in the developing world. Donors who had supported Rwanda began to set conditions for further support, and democratisation was one of them. At the end of the 1980s the Habyarimana regime was weakening and in its last-ditch attempts to stabilise the old authoritarian rule, human rights were abused and political murders were carried out at an increasing rate. By the end of 1990 the political crisis in the country was deep and evident. It was at this point that the new multiparty system was introduced.

The process of establishing new political parties only took off in 1992. Through their emerging strength and because of the general situation in the country, the position and privileges of the Rwandan èlite came under serious threat. Several scholars (Percival & Homer Dixon, 1996; Scherrer, 1997; Uvin, 1998) argue that this atmosphere of insecurity within the èlite was the driving force behind the actions taken by the authorities to plan and initiate the terrible events of 1994.

The actions of Tutsi refugees from Uganda were crucial to the course of events. As the Tutsi refugees abroad were not allowed to return to the country, and President Habyarimana refused to contemplate any change in policy, the exiles in Uganda in 1987 organised in the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF). This was an offensive political organisation dedicated to the return of exiles to Rwanda, if necessary by force. When political crisis overtook Rwanda in 1990, the RPF took this as a signal to start their attacks. The first incursions took place at the beginning of October 1990. One week later 500–1000 Tutsi were massacred and by the end of October Rwanda was in the grip of a full-scale guerrilla war. These events also marked the beginning of the massacres of Tutsi in the country, which escalated to genocidal proportions in April 1994, when the plane carrying President Habyarimana and the new President of Burundi, Cyprien Ntaryamira, was shot down as it came in to land at Kigali Airport. This incident was to mark the beginning of the most tragic three months in the history of Rwanda. The peace negotiations that had been initiated and led by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), particularly Tanzania, and supported by the UN, and which resulted in the Arusha Accords in August 1993, could not prevent what happened.

Any attempt to analyse the causal factors behind the genocide in Rwanda would not be complete without addressing the mobilisation of the masses to take part in the massacres. How was it that violence became an accepted means of action in the conflict and how was it allowed to escalate as it did? The deeply ingrained obedience to authority is one factor contributing to the explanation of the unthinkable (Prunier, 1995; Scherrer, 1999). This was a precondition for the 'structural violence' (Uvin, 1998) that comprised the long-standing dynamics of exclusion, marginalisation, inequity, frustration and racism, and that culminated in acute violence in April 1994. On this basis the government was able to create and capitalise on popular fear by stating that the Tutsi, in the form of the RPF, were planning to seize land; which was recognised as a significant threat (Percival & Homer-Dixon, 1996: 282). According to Prunier, the propaganda degenerated into the total dehumanisation of the Tutsi as the 'Evil Other'—a core factor making the genocide possible (Prunier 1995: 142). By means of terminology and the massive propaganda manufactured by the authorities, the Tutsi were painted as dangerous creatures and bad weeds. In this way, crimes against them were both trivialised and 'justified'. The total dehumanisation of the Tutsi was carried out on a systematic basis by the authorities and the radical Hutu racist parties through community meetings, and written and spoken media, such as Radio Mille Collins. These are some of the attempts to explain why the vast majority of the masses took part in the attacks and slaughter. However, they are far from exhaustive.

Striking the balance of these attempts to explain the Rwandan tragedy, there seems to be a relatively strong indication that the driving force behind the state-organised mobilisation of the masses towards genocide was élite insecurity and the perceived need to secure power and privileges. The various factors presented above contributed in different ways to weakening the Rwandan regime and thereby aggravating élite insecurity. There are many facets to this picture that could have been highlighted and many more questions that need to be answered, particularly with regard to ethical and psychological issues. However, for the purpose of this article, I will limit the more general description of the explanations of the catastrophe to the above. On this basis, I will now address the question of how multilateral development agencies influenced the situation through the main strategies they promoted in the period up to 1994.

### Propositions regarding the role of multilateral development agencies

The multilateral development agencies, with the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the front rank, promoted three main strategies in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994. These had contrasting origins within the multilateral system and developed different dynamics. They were:

(1) economic structural adjustment programmes (SAPs);
(2) the multiparty democratisation process;
(3) the peace negotiation and implementation process (in co-operation with the OAU).

All three strategies were meant as contributions to restoring stability and as a basis for further development in the country. However, although they were linked to each other in a seemingly integrated manner, I presume that they also had contradictory and mutually conflicting effects on each other. Against this background, I submit the following propositions:

*The multilateral strategies on economic structural adjustment and multiparty democratisation had mutually conflicting effects on each other*

The structural adjustment programmes were imposed from the outside rather than through a democratic process that could have provided some kind of democratic legitimacy. Thus, while donors on the one hand demanded a multiparty democracy, on the other they virtually dictated Rwandan economic policy. This combination contributed to a weakening of the regime.

*The multilateral strategies on economic structural adjustment and peace negotiation/implementation had mutually conflicting effects on each other*

The disbursements of structural adjustment loans as well as various development aid efforts were increasingly tied up with implementation of the Arusha Accords. This created a tempo for the process which made President Habyarimana unable (and probably also unwilling) to deal adequately with the real barriers to peace—namely the resistance of his *Akazu* (ie the informal advisory council made up of members of his wife's family and associates, and their allies in the right-wing extremist parties). Thus he increasingly lost control over his closest allies, the militias, and the political situation in the country as a whole. The president became a hostage of the peace process and the terms of international conditionality.

*The multilateral strategies on multiparty democratisation and peace negotiation/implementation had mutually conflicting effects on each other*

The multiparty democratisation process started before the peace process, but continued alongside the latter in Rwanda. Whereas a multiparty democratisation process *de facto* leads to a fragmentation of political groupings and competition between them in order to achieve power, a peace process presupposes unification of political fractions in order to achieve its goal. A multiparty system may contribute to channelling different opinions into peace negotiations and thus to a process of unification. However, such a synergetic effect depends on the context. With a well established democracy rooted in a long-standing democratic culture, it is more likely that synergies will evolve than with the introduction of a multiparty system in a country that has traditionally followed a deeply ingrained authoritarian rule. It follows therefore that the concurrent implementation of such processes in a country without democratic traditions, with an almost non-existent civil society (Uvin, 1998: 17) and without institutions monitoring the human rights situation, may not fulfil expectations. In the case of Rwanda, the democratisation process effectively undermined the peace efforts

and finally shattered all prospects of peace, as the new parties together with the radicalised *Akazu* intensified the conflict to the point of genocide.

In sum, I propose that all three strategies in combination contributed to a weakening of the regime, placing Habyarimana in an impossible position from which he was unable to comply with the repeated demands of the UN to implement the Arusha Accords. The outcome was a growing sense of insecurity among the elite, finally followed by the assassination of the president and the ensuing genocide.

The responsibility for the tragedy in Rwanda must be borne by those who made it happen, no matter how influenced they were by other actors. However, assuming that my propositions hold true, the combination of core strategies promoted by the UN and the IMF/WB to stabilise the situation in Rwanda—despite their best intentions—in fact triggered the conflict. In the following, I will substantiate and discuss these propositions.

## The three main strategies of multilateral development assistance from 1990 to 1994

The US system and the Bretton Woods Institutions were the sources of the three main strategies implemented in Rwanda. The IMF and the WB were responsible for the agreements on the structural adjustment programmes. Led by the UNDP, the UN and the IMF/WB, together with multilateral and bilateral development aid organisations, pressed for the implementation of a democratisation process—the stick being the weapon of conditionality (ie disbursements of funds conditional on palpable democratisation efforts). The peace negotiation process was led by the Government of Tanzania, supported by the OAU and the UN. The implementation of the Arusha Accords was also pressed for by the same parties, again wielding the stick of conditionality (this time disbursements being conditional on palpable peace implementation efforts). All three processes were conceived as stability-restoring strategies and as a basis for further developments in the country.

### *Economic structural adjustment programmes*

Despite increasing industrial production reaching as high as 16% of GDP in 1992, Rwanda's economic production had concentrated on the export of coffee and to a lesser extent tea. By 1986 coffee accounted for 82% of Rwanda's export earnings. However, international prices were on a downward spiral and finally collapsed in 1989. This led to a dramatic loss in export revenues at the same time as external debts rose rapidly. The situation put the government in a difficult position, as it had paid a fixed sum for coffee to the peasants throughout the 1980s. In 1990, finally, they had to cut coffee prices from 125 Rwanda francs (RWF) per kilo to RWF 115.

This was the situation when the WB, IMF and the government of Rwanda in November 1990 reached an agreement on an economic structural adjustment programme (SAP) for the country in an effort to stabilise the economy. Together with several bilateral donors, the Bretton Woods institutions

contributed $216 million to the programme in 1990 and another $375 million in 1991. This level was maintained until 1993 (UN, 1996: 11). The agreement was reached a few weeks after the start of civil war in Rwanda. Although the support was earmarked for commodity imports, there are indications that a sizeable portion was diverted towards the acquisition of military hardware.[2]

A few days after the SAP was launched, the Rwandan franc was devalued by 40%. A short time later sizeable price rises in fuel and consumer goods were announced (Chossudovsky 1996: 939). Inflation rocketed. In addition the SAP led to higher fees for health and education. As a response to the attacks from Uganda, the government diverted up to 40% of its budget to military purposes (Uvin 1996a: 14). Although this was partly compensated for by development aid, as well as military aid from some friendly regimes, it drained the social and development programmes even further. In June 1992 another devaluation—this time amounting to 15%—of the local currency was made as part of the second SAP. Farmers considerably increased their production of coffee—at the cost of food production for their own needs—but their earnings decreased by about 20% anyway (Uvin 1996a: 14).

Although several of the provisions of the SAP were implemented, as shown above, not all the components materialised (Uvin, 1998: 58–59). Whereas public sector jobs were to be cut back, the Rwandan government only managed to halt expansion. Most of the measures to deregulate the markets for goods and services, exports and imports were never sufficiently implemented. Thus, only parts of the agreed credits from the IMF and the World Bank were ever disbursed (Uvin, 1998: 58).

The peasants faced increasing hardship because of this economic malaise, combined with population pressure and the declining area of arable land. In addition, the severe droughts in 1989–90, 1991 and 1993, as well as diseases affecting the cassava and sweet potato staples caused food shortages and malnutrition among half a million people (Sellström & Wohlgemuth, 1996: 37). This situation was most serious for the people in the southwest and the south of the country.

People in the north, on the other hand, found themselves in the midst of the civil war. Hundreds of thousands of peasant farmers were displaced as they tried to escape the attacks launched by the RPF from Uganda. In addition, the war made the roads to the Kenyan port of Mombassa impassable, which affected trade relations. The war also destroyed industrial enterprises and the tourist industry, which by then had become the third largest earner of foreign exchange in the country. In turn all this had a devastating effect on the national economy, with negative impacts on both coffee and food production (Sellström & Wohlgemut, 1996: 20).

Whereas there is sparse evidence of a direct causal relationship between this economic malaise and the massacres of 1994, there is reason to believe that there were indirect links: because of the economic downswing, the Habyarimana regime was forced into negotiations with the IMF and the WB on the structural adjustment loans to get the economy back on track. These loans were made conditional on democratic developments in Rwanda, and after the Arusha Accords they were also made conditional on the implementation of these accords

(Chossudovsky, 1996). In the beginning there was some progress in the field of democratisation. However, as the peace negotiations entered a period of stalemate, the World Bank announced that it would halt the disbursements under its loan agreement. At the beginning of 1994 several donors reduced or suspended financial aid (UN, 1996: 11), thus heavily increasing the pressure on Habyarimana to achieve results with regard to the implementation of the Arusha Accords.

*Democratisation*

Issuing demands for democratisation to developing countries was common donor practice after the end of the Cold War. Democratisation meant the introduction of a multiparty system after the model of Western societies. For a country like Rwanda with impending social unrest, the imposition of a process of democratisation brought with it a higher level of instability (Scherrer, 1999). Rwanda introduced a multiparty system in 1990 and, in a short space of time, around 10 small parties of various denominations were founded. However, their role in Rwandan political life was not particularly active in the first few years (Prunier, 1995: 127, 164). Although Habyarimana formed an all-party coalition government in 1990, the parties played only a token role, so they took action to increase their influence. Finally, in 1992, Habyarimana formed his second coalition government, this time with significant representation from the opposition parties (Adelmann & Suhrke, 1996: 23). However, these opposition parties were not represented in the peace negotiations.

In March 1992 a party was founded which would prove to have a great effect on the situation. This was the Coalition pour la Défense de la République (CDR), a radical Hutu racist party positioned to the right of the ruling party, the Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRND). The CDR taunted the MRND and the government over their alleged 'softness' towards the RPF and the political opposition (Prunier, 1995: 128). The Mouvement Démocratique Républicain (MRD), which was founded in 1991 as a broad-based populist party with an anti-Tutsi image, also played an increasingly important role.

The leadership of the MRD consisted of ex-establishment people who had been involved in personal imbroglios with the president and/or the *Akazu*. Slowly it attracted more and more prominently placed people with an axe to grind with the regime and who opposed its peace policy. The CDR on the other hand grew steadily more consolidated, publishing a newspaper and subsequently establishing its own radio station, the Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collins. This was after the government had relinquished its monopoly on broadcasting. As the peace process continued in 1993, the stance of the CDR became more and more critical of the president and the government, complaining that it too should have been represented in the Arusha negotiation process—or at least consulted (Prunier, 1995: 163). In response to this exclusion the CDR took an increasingly active part in building up groups of militias and planning massacres—along with the government party and the public authorities. CDR played a crucial role in fuelling the flames of genocide—and its radio station orchestrated its implementation.

449

This is how the democratisation process, pressed on the country by the multilateral development agencies in collaboration with bilateral agencies, actually paved the way for a fragmentation of political groupings, the outcome of which was decreasing support for Habyarimana. The multiparty system, as it evolved in Rwanda, has been described as a cloak behind which particular interests encouraged ethnic mobilisation and fed political fiefdoms which usurped the civil administration (former minister Gasana, referred to in Adelmann & Suhrke, 1996: 23). In the long run the creation of a democratic system of government is crucial to prevent conflict and promote development. However, it is imperative to choose the right timing and speed when introducing such a system. During a peace process there is often a demand for the highest possible degree of political unity. If new channels for differing political views are given free rein, this might disturb—and in the worst case—jeopardise the peace efforts. On the other hand, there is also the possibility that differing political views might seek out other channels for expression, if parties are not permitted. However, in the Rwandan case the emergence of a variety of competing parties evidently contributed to a weakening of the regime, which, together with the pressure to get the implementation of the peace accords on track, gradually split the regime asunder—in turn stoking the growth of Hutu extremist parties. Thus, the attempt to democratise the country indirectly led to a weakening of the peace process as the most important groupings did not stand behind the negotiation outcome. On the contrary, they were prepared to do anything to hinder its implementation.

*Peace negotiations and implementation*

Habyarimana, who in 1990 had been pressed by Western aid donors to go along with the principles of multiparty democracy, was forced into negotiations with the RPF which took place in the Tanzanian city of Arusha. In the final Arusha Accords of August 1993 Habyarimana agreed to power sharing with the Hutu opposition and the RPF. Furthermore he agreed to integrate the RPF into a new Rwandan army, giving the guerrillas almost half the positions among officers and men. The presidential guard was to be merged with elite RPF troops into a smaller republican guard (Keane, 1995: 195). The UN deployed 2500 troops to oversee the implementation of the accords. However, for the most part the implementation of the accords was never realised.

At the same time President Habyarimana's informal council, the *Akazu*, was busy making preparations to carry out the mass-scale killings, which were to escalate in the following year. They gave their instructions to the presidentially appointed *bourgemestres* (mayors); they continued building up the Interahamwe militias and mobilised Burundian Hutu refugees who had fled to Rwanda after the assassination of Burundi Hutu President Ndadaye in October 1993 (Sellström & Wohlgemut, 1996: 11). Thus President Habyarimana followed a two-track policy. On the one hand he appeared to co-operate with the international community in negotiations and in preparing to implement the Arusha Accords, but at the same time he made efforts to maintain control over the militias, thus

450

retaining power. These two tracks would become steadily harder to combine—and the president gradually lost the support of his own.

The implementation of the Arusha Accords threatened the power and privileges of the *Akazu*. Resistance to the peace negotiations and later to the implementation of the Arusha Accords grew steadily stronger in this informal presidential council. Although a transitional government and National Assembly were formally established in January 1994, the composition of these bodies was delayed, and they actually never materialised. Resistance was massive and the security situation deteriorating. There is clear evidence that the fear caused by the break-down of law and order, in addition to the increasing level of resistance, gave the *Akazu* the motivation to prepare and plan the massacres over a period of several years up to April 1994 (Percival & Homer-Dixon, 1996: 287; Scherrer, 1997: 59). After 1992 they were supported in their efforts by the new Hutu extremist parties. Nobody knows who finally killed the president, but several observers point to evidence indicating that the *Akazu* was to blame (see eg Percival & Homer-Dixon, 1996: 288; Prunier, 1995: 214). If this holds true, it is likely that there were two major reasons providing a motive: a) pressure to implement the Arusha Accords increased in spring 1994; b) the new radical Hutu parties gained ground among Rwandans. Thus, the assassination and the succeeding atrocities were aimed at stopping this whole development once and for all.[3]

Adelman & Suhrke (1996: 33) write that a window of opportunity for dealing with the extremists had existed in 1992 before they latter had grown in strength and while donors' aid commitment could still be adjusted. However, this opportunity was not grasped. Human rights conditionality was preached but not practised. When conditionality was finally sparsely applied from 1993 and increasingly from the beginning of 1994, it seems to have worked as a match igniting the conflict. The intention, according to Alan Kuperman (1996: 228), was to use conditionality as leverage for achieving a situation of mutually debilitating stalemate. This paved the way for further mediation and ultimately the Arusha Accords. In the midst of negotiations in 1993, Kuperman says, the USA made aid to Rwanda conditional on continued democratisation, respect for human rights and the rule of law as well as a reduction in the level of violence. This was the carrot. However, when the government of Rwanda failed to comply, the USA applied the stick in order to apply pressure behind the conditions. It terminated all but humanitarian assistance and capped aid at $6 million. The World Bank announced that it would interrupt disbursements under its loan agreement (*New African*, June 1994, referred to in Chossudovsky, 1996: 939), and European states threatened to suspend their bilateral aid. According to Kuperman, this virtual economic stranglehold apparently had the desired impact on Habyarimana's willingness to compromise. However, it also caused deep discord between the President and his *Akazu*—as well as with other extremists. This forced developments in which a unified group split into two new groups that grew steadily apart. There was the president with the government on one side and his *Akazu* and the extremist groupings on the other. The latter became increasingly significant. It maintained control of the militias and won more and more popular support,

whereas Habyarimana increasingly became a hostage of the Arusha peace negotiations.

After the Arusha Accords were signed, Radio Mille Collins began broadcasting exhortations to attack the Tutsi. This was not stopped. Human right groups warned the international community of an impending calamity. In March 1994 many human rights activists evacuated their families from Kigali in the belief that massacres were just round the corner (Keane, 1995: 196).

*How contradictory strategies of multilateral development assistance triggered the conflict*

The above elaboration indicates that the multilateral development agencies sought to apply an integrated approach in their efforts to stabilise and improve the situation in Rwanda, by linking the different strategies to conditions which were mutually agreed upon by the main donors. However, it also shows that this could not hinder the contradictory and mutually negating effects of these strategies—which in the end triggered the conflict:

* SAPs contributed to undermining the democratic legitimacy of the government.
* The multiparty democratisation process led to the fragmentation of political groupings and the emergence of new radical racist groups. This further weakened the position of the government, which by then was involved in the peace negotiations. Hence, the legitimacy of the peace process—and thus the basis for its implementation—was also undermined.
* Further disbursements of loans were made conditional on further democratisation and the subsequent implementation of the peace accords in a situation in which such improvements were made impossible by the contradictory nature of these processes and the continued weakening of the regime. The president was forced into a corner from which he was unable to control the situation. Finally he lost control—and his life.

This indicates that the three propositions set out above can be substantiated and that there is reason to believe that the main strategies of the multilateral development agencies had a negative influence on the course of events leading up to the conflict. This does not reduce the responsibility of those who made it happen. But it does show how well-intended interventions by external actors may have the opposite effect.

**Lessons to learn: the role of multilateral development agencies in crisis prevention**

The scope for drawing general conclusions on the basis of a single case study is limited. However, it might be useful to pinpoint some lessons as a contribution to an understanding of the role of development agencies in crisis prevention.

As the case of Rwanda showed, multilateral agencies were active within three main areas of assistance: socioeconomic development, democratic governance and peacekeeping. These areas correspond to the three main areas of multilateral assistance: (1) socioeconomic development; (2) democratic governance and

human rights; and (3) peacekeeping and humanitarian aid. I will argue that external assistance to countries in a situation of emerging conflict requires an assistance rationale which integrates the strategic objectives of these three areas in order to succeed (based on Rønnfeldt & Andersen, 1998).

*Towards an integrated rationale for development assistance in emerging conflicts*

As the point of departure for my argumentation, I will distinguish between three rationales for multilateral assistance to developing countries:

* The partial rationale: assistance in the three main aid areas is maintained independently of each other—more or less without co-ordination.
* The interlinked rationale: assistance in one of the main aid areas is linked to conditions regarding efforts in one or both of the other areas.
* The integrated rationale: assistance seeks to take into account the potential reciprocal effects of aid within and between the main areas of aid when planning the various strategies, programmes and projects.

Until the end of the 1980s the partial approach was dominant in development planning. There was a strict division of labour between multilateral actors with regard to assistance: the World Bank and UN organisations engaged in development assistance (with the UNDP in the lead position), and covered the area of socioeconomic development, whereas peacekeeping and humanitarian aid was attended to by specially assigned peace forces and UN bodies engaged in humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, UNWRA). Because of the relatively narrow project focus of development aid in this period, assistance in the area of democratic governance and human rights was not so much in focus.

In Rwanda the IMF/WB seem to have based their introduction of the first SAP on a partial rationale when they introduced it along with a 40% devaluation of the currency, only few weeks after the outbreak of civil war. This contributed to further social unrest and a weakening of the regime. However, later they linked further disbursements of loans to improvements in the democratisation process and the implementation of the peace accords—and they were followed by other major donors. In other words they pursued an interlinked rationale.

This interlinking followed in the wake of the general trend of conditionality which emerged at the turn of the 1990s when the interrelations between the different areas of multilateral assistance received increased attention. For instance, the importance of democratic governance and human rights for socioeconomic development was first really 'discovered' at this time. In order to interlink different development targets, aid in one area of multilateral assistance was linked to conditions regarding efforts in another area, as in the case of Rwanda.

The problem with the partial and interlinked approaches is that they both tend to limit the understanding of impacts, because they are based on a one-way, linear, cause-and-effect understanding. They are open to impact assessments within the actual area of assistance and spill-over effects in an interlinked area of assistance, at least to a certain extent. However, there is no analysis of the mutual impact of aid efforts between the three main areas of assistance.

As the integrated approach requires comprehensive planning efforts, we need to know when such a rationale is called for. Obviously there is a need to strike the right balance in assistance between partial, interlinked and integrated rationales and short- and long-term perspectives. Context and timing are key words in this endeavour. In a general sense, when violence threatens to escalate, the balance between a partial and an integrated assistance rationale should tip in favour of the latter. When violence de-escalates, an integrated approach may be slowly scaled down.

In the case of Rwanda, a one-way, cause-and-effect conception of the relations between socioeconomic development, democratisation and peace on the part of the.donor community seems to have triggered the escalation of the conflict. Democratisation was seen as a precondition for peace and was forced on Rwanda by terms of conditionality. The result was a massive grouping of racist extremists within a very short time, leading to the destabilisation of the peace efforts. Instead of adapting to the new situation and inviting the new political leaders to the negotiation table, for instance, the warning signs were neglected and virtually nothing was done to stop the racist activities of the extremist parties.

The crucial question is whether an integrated rationale could have prevented the negative effects of the multilateral efforts in Rwanda. We will never know, of course, how that would have worked out, but in Mali such an approach was applied in a period of conflict in 1995–97 with great success (Rønnfeldt & Andersen, 1998: 18–51).

*Implications for preventive action*

A potential conflict may be understood as an extraordinary situation between relative peace and full-blown conflict during which there is an immediate risk that the level of violence may escalate. Such a period is likely to be measured in months rather than years. It may emerge from a peaceful situation, when an unsolved dispute between sociopolitical groups escalates and when one or more of the parties is likely to use violent means to secure its interest. But it also refers to situations after a conflict has de-escalated, but during which the re-emergence of conflict is more likely than the consolidation of peace (Rønnfeldt & Andersen, 1998: 15). Humanitarian organisations struggle with high levels of uncertainty both with regard to assumptions about how situations might evolve and the effects of their own involvement (Benini, 1997). Difficulties obtaining data an conflict-ridden regions lie at the very heart of the problem. It is only possible to make a calculated guess about how conflicts might evolve, and such calculations are based on more or less well-founded information. The validity and reliability of the information is therefore crucial to its early-warning value (Skaaren-Fystro, 1998).

Beyond the present focus on multilateral development assistance, the concept of preventive action should include any activity that is undertaken deliberately by external parties in order to intervene in a situation which, left to itself, might escalate to violent conflict between social groups or states. A broad range of external actors which relate to conflict-prone societies is relevant in this context.

Multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental organisations engaged in a wide range of sectors—including military, economic social, and environmental sectors—ought to consider how in cases of a potential conflict they can contribute to its de-escalation. As Uvin (1998) so convincingly documents, it is the very character of aid that it intervenes in domestic structures and dynamics pertaining to the social, economic and political development of a country. The crucial challenges are, therefore, to recognise the directions in which the structures and dynamics are pushed, to seek to make these directions meet the needs of the country, and to recognise and prevent the possible negative side-effects of the efforts. As the case of Rwanda shows, this is of greatest importance when it comes to situations of potential conflict.

Every conflict is unique, involving its own combination of factors and dynamics. Measures to prevent them will vary accordingly. It is therefore impossible to invoke a universal strategy for development assistance in such conditions. What can be done, however, is to develop a better record of earlier experiences about how activities in one field of assistance may have had negative—as well as positive—spill-over effects in the other fields. Such lessons can assist external actors in their concrete endeavours to develop efficient conflict prevention strategies.

Conflict prevention should be an extraordinary measure that is brought to bear in situations of potential conflict, in which the existence of a state is at risk and/or in which systematic violence against one or more groups of people threatens to escalate. This entails that for shorter periods it may sometimes be necessary to postpone sound but politically controversial macroeconomic reforms until the state has the political authority to implement such decisions. Doing otherwise may be detrimental to security and development in both the short and the long run. It might also be necessary to postpone efforts such as the introduction of multiparty democratisation measures in situations in which they could undermine peace efforts. An ideal policy framework for preventive action would, *inter alia*, entail that external actors recognise the patterns of interdependence between security, democratisation and socioeconomic development in the actual country or region—and act accordingly.

## Notes

[1] This article is based on the joint research project 'The Role of Development Co-operation in Crisis Situations and Potential for Preventive Action' carried out by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and The Fridtjof Nansen Institute in 1997-98.

[2] According to the Washington-based Human Rights Watch, Egypt agreed to provide the Rwanda government with military equipment worth $6 million, while South Africa agreed to provide military equipment worth $5.9 million dollars (Chossudovsky, 1996: 941).

[3] Several Rwanda analysts have come to this conclusion, among them Percival & Homer-Dixon, 1996: 275 and Sellström & Wohlgemuth, 1996: 50.

## References

Adelmann, H & Suhrke A. (1996) Early warning and conflict management, Part II of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the*

*Rwanda Experience* (Copenhagen: Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda).

Benini, A A (1997) Uncertainty and information flows in humanitarian agencies, *Disasters. The Journal of Disaster Studies, Policy and Management*, 4 (21), 1997, pp 335-353.

Chossudovsky, M (1996) Economic genocide in Rwanda, *Economic and Political Weekly* (India), 13 April 1996, pp 938-941.

Destexhe, A (1995) *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (London: Pluto Press).

Keane, F (1995) *Seasons of Blood—A Rwandan Journey*, (Harmondsworth Penguin).

Klinghoffer, A J (1998) *The International Dimension of Genocide in Rwanda* (London: Macmillian).

Kuperman, A (1996) The other lesson of Rwanda: mediators sometimes do more damage then good, *SAIS Review*, 16 (1), pp 221-240.

Omaar, R & de Waal, A (eds) (1995) *Rwanda: Death Despair and Defiance* (London: African Rights).

Prunier, G (1995) *The Rwanda Crisis 1959-1994—History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst & Company).

Percival, V & Homer-Dixon, T (1996) Environmental scarcity and violent conflict: the case of Rwanda, *Journal of Environment and Development*, 5 (3), pp 270-291.

Rønnfeldt, C & Andersen, R (1998) *Options for Preventive Action. Multilateral Development Organisations' Impact on the Conflicts in Mali and Rwanda*, FNI Report 9/98, Fridtjof Nansen Institute and The Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs).

Scherrer, C P (1999) *Genocide and Genocide Prevention: General Outlines Exemplified with the Cataclysm in Rwanda 1994*, COPRI Working Papers 14/1999, Copenhagen Peace Research Institute.

Scherrer, C P (1997) *Ethnisierung und Völkermord in Zentralafrika. Genozid in Rwanda, Bürgerkrieg in Burundi und die Rolle der Weltgemeinschaft* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag).

Sellström, T & Wohlgemuth, L (1996) Historical perspective: some explanatory factors, Part I of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience* (Copenhagen: Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda).

Skaaren-Fystro, G (1998) *Early Warning as a Basis for Crisis Prevention in Developing Countries. The Role of Information in Norwegian Decision Making*, FNI Report 19/98, Fridtjof Nansen Institute, Lysaker; 1998.

Storey, A (1999) Economic and ethnic conflict: structural adjustment in Rwanda, *Development Policy Review*, 17, pp 43-63.

UN (1996) *The United Nations and Rwanda 1993-1996* The United Nations Blue Books Series. Volume X, UN Department of Public Information, New York.

Uvin, P (1998) *Aiding Violence. The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*, West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press).

Uvin, P (1996a) Tragedy in Rwanda: the political ecology of conflict, *Environment*, 38 (3), pp 7-15.

Uvin, P (1996b) *Development, Aid and Conflict. Reflections from the Case of Rwanda*, Research for Actions Series No 24, The United Nations University, World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki.