U.S. Aid as Facilitator in Africa’s Peace Negotiations

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It is frequently assumed that the promise of increased economic assistance after the signing of a peace accord provides an incentive to the negotiating parties to reach an agreement. External economic aid represents a future peace dividend promised to the parties for overcoming their differences and agreeing to solve their problems jointly. The adversaries have an incentive to agree to peace in order to gain the benefits following from ending the uncertainty of protracted war and creating new possibilities for economic development; the external donors secure the benefits resulting from the establishment of a new zone of political stability as well as enhanced international norms.

Not only do wars contribute to state weakness and the loss of effective rule, but they spawn other related problems, such as arms smuggling, currency manipulation, cross-border violence, limits on exports, terrorist activities and training facilities, and environmental degradation. International aid agencies and humanitarian organizations have a difficult time operating in the war zones, leaving many civilians unattended and vulnerable to starvation and disease. In light of the challenges posed by state weakness, analysts in the developed countries, such as former U.S. Secretary of State George P. Shultz, see it as a primary task to “restor[e] the vitality of the state system.” Thus, in theory at least, both donors and recipients stand to be beneficiaries of ending war and creating a sound basis for a sustained peace to follow.

In holding out the prospect of economic aid, the external actor or actors are attempting to promote peace by making the former combatants stakeholders in the new and hopefully more prosperous post-war order. These incentives represent investments in the new society and its peace process. They encourage commitment to established political institutions and considerably raise the costs on breaking the new agreement and
returning to war. In this context, incentives consist of distributive and symbolic rewards that encourage the warring parties to shift their priorities and agree to a compromise on the major issues in contention. By changing the calculation of costs and benefits, foreign aid seeks to raise the opportunity costs of continuing the war, and to make the prospect of peaceful relations more attractive. But do these implied or real promises of foreign assistance for the period after the peace amount to credible inducements? If it can be implied that future external assistance programs are merely symbolic and without substantive backing, then the recipients may feel betrayed and, possibly, resume active hostilities and warfare. Offers of an economic assistance peace dividend must be put forward sincerely and be sufficient to encourage commitment to the peace accord; if not, they may prove counterproductive.

In this essay, we examine experiences with U.S. foreign aid to Africa during and after peace negotiations to gain a preliminary assessment of its credibility as an incentive for peace. What is the trajectory of the foreign aid experience during the negotiating process and during the initial period of implementing a peace agreement? And was the promise held out by this inducement warranted in terms of policy outcomes? In making this preliminary assessment, we focus largely on cases of negotiation and implementation prior to and during the 2001-02 periods. This leads us to see three general patterns at work: one consisting of a response in which donors provide substantial economic reconstruction and development aid over an extended period of time and have a direct impact in the peace process; a second where international cooperation consists almost entirely of emergency humanitarian relief funds over the short term; and a third pattern in
which the donor, in our case the United States, does not provide additional postconflict assistance.

**The Relief - Development Continuum**

External assistance can play a critical role in Africa’s peace processes by providing critical resources in two fundamentally different ways. On the one hand, these resources may be offered to provide short-term relief to at-risk populations lacking adequate food, shelter, or health care. Foreign aid resources may also be allocated to help support more long-term reconstruction and economic development in sectors such as education, infrastructure, housing, agricultural production, and so forth that were devastated by the fighting. In postconflict situations, donors respond by offering either a relief package or a more development-oriented one. Figure 3 below sets this out along a continuum and places the countries in this study along its axis.5

**Figure 1: Relief to Development Continuum.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Relief</th>
<th>Development Aid</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
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<td>DR Congo</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<td>Zimbabwe</td>
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On one end of the spectrum is relief aid, which includes short-term emergency food aid, shelter, and medical assistance that usually flow in immediately after the fighting. Donors generally prefer to provide short-term emergency aid. It is a relatively inexpensive response that does not involve a long-term commitment. Typically, they provide relief aid for up to three years after a conflict. However, this humanitarian assistance has a limited effect, because it deals with symptoms of the problem rather than its causes, and people remain vulnerable unless their livelihoods are restored and
conditions are created for new economic opportunities. Furthermore, emergency relief provides only a limited incentive to combatants to put down their guns and sign on to a peace deal.

By contrast, more long-term development assistance for economic reconstruction and development has more enduring consequences and better supports the conditions for a lasting peace. This type of aid package provides a strong incentive to get parties to negotiate in good firsthand to implement their agreements. The peace dividend now represents something substantial. Because leaders can bring promises of development assistance back to their constituents and tout it as fruits of the struggle, it can encourage group members to commit to the bargain. To arrive at a better understanding of these dynamics, we will now examine the experiences that six African countries (Zimbabwe, South Africa, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) have had with U.S. foreign aid during and after peace negotiations. This effort will provide us with a preliminary assessment of the credibility relief and development aid as an incentive for peace.

**Pattern 1: Long-Term Response - Reconstruction and Development Assistance**

Years of protracted warfare can leave a country devastated, with its infrastructure destroyed and its agricultural capacity in ruins. Rebuilding from the ashes of war can prove extremely costly. Donor promises to contribute reconstruction and development assistance can play a large part in moving negotiations between warring parties forward. For example, in the cases of South Africa and Zimbabwe, discussed below, the United States successfully used aid as an incentive to encourage the negotiating parties to reach a compromise.
During the past decade, South Africa became the darling of the international community. Its negotiations and subsequent regime change presented a model for others to emulate. Donors extended a considerable amount of assistance and worked closely with the South African authorities and civil society to ensure a peaceful transition from apartheid. Even before Nelson Mandela was released from prison, international aid donors began to pledge increased aid if negotiations between the de Klerk government and the African National Congress (ANC) would take place. As Bratton and Lansberg point out, “Employing carrots as well as sticks, the international community held out the prospect that the South African government could end its diplomatic isolation and receive international financial assistance by entering into good faith negotiations with its
adversaries.” Indeed, negotiations did progress and international aid started to pour into the country.

However, the model transition faced serious problems that threatened to undermine the peace process. By 1993, concern over the negotiations reached a highpoint as violence between ANC and Inkatha militants began to soar out of control. The specter of extremist terrorism grabbed the headlines with the assassination of Chris Hani, the chief-of-staff of Umkhonto we Sizwe (or MK, the ANC’s armed wing) and Secretary-General of South African Communist Party. Hani’s assassination made the international community increasingly aware of fragility of regime change in South Africa. During this period, President Clinton spoke with both Mandela and de Klerk during a visit to the United States; Clinton offered a significant economic development package in exchange for both parties agreeing to firm dates for a transitional government and subsequent elections. In this offer, Clinton pledged that the U.S. would commit to $600 million over a three-year period after the holding of the 1994 elections. Clinton sought to extend U.S. cooperation to all partners engaged in the bargaining process. The focus of American cooperation appealed to the ANC and it allies, because it would finance many of the projects that they had envisioned for the future (i.e., housing, education, rural development, health services, electrification, civil society, and so forth). The Clinton proposal also enticed the crucial business community by opening American markets through the extension of preferential trade status on a wide variety of South Africa exports.

Interestingly, the South African government felt strong enough to ask donors to contribute aid to national development programs they had worked our on their own, not
those set out by the donors themselves. To a great extent, then, the South Africans were able to control the dialog over development aid with the donors, and surprisingly perhaps the donors appeared more than willing to comply. For example, U.S.A.I.D. told the South African government that it would “refocus its entire program toward the RDP [Reconstruction and Development Program]” if negotiations were fruitful. Donors, including the United States, all pledged to provide development funds to assist in the RDP objectives, like building homes, creating jobs, increasing education opportunities, and extending the health network.

The massive contributions made by donors to post-apartheid South Africa provided almost two and a half billion dollars between 1990 and 1998. The United States, the European Union, and Japan accounted for over seventy percent of this aid. U.S.A.I.D. provided around seven hundred million dollars of that total. Interestingly, the vast majority of American aid, as well as with the other donors, was development assistance. Ninety-four percent (six hundred fifty-two million dollars) of U.S. assistance was devoted to development aid, while only six percent (or forty-three million dollars) went to fight disease, primarily HIV/AIDS, (which also contributes to developmental objectives).

Why would donors make this choice? Clearly, both donors and South Africans had an interest in encouraging a successful outcome. The U.S. and other international donors provided aid to this relatively wealthy country in order to facilitate South Africa’s transition to a multiracial democracy and to maintain its place in the international economic system. South Africa’s success would result in a model transition. Its failure
would represent a major setback to American stability objectives worldwide, and the level of donor commitment demonstrates this is an overarching sense of purpose.

Table 2: U.S. Aid to Zimbabwe by Program Type (1979-86)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Food for Peace (Title I &amp; II)</th>
<th>Development Assistance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
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<td>1985</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>70</td>
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</tbody>
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Aid donors can exert a considerable influence on the behavior of various actors negotiating peace accords, and Zimbabwe’s transition to majority-rule provides a striking example of this. Reflecting on the role of American incentives in the negotiations, President Carter has indicated that, “there’s no doubt that to some degree financial promises played a role” in inducing Zimbabweans to accept the Lancaster House Agreement. In all, the U.S. would commit three hundred million dollars in assistance for economic reconstruction and development in Zimbabwe, in an effort to facilitate a bargain between the rebel Patriotic Front and a regime led by black moderates, with white backing. This offer of extended aid over seven years clearly was enticing enough to harden “…the political resolve of internal actors to maintain the momentum of the peace
process." The American package aimed to help finance land resettlement, economic development, job creation, and educational programs. This gesture helped induce the negotiating parties to conclude their bargaining and implement their agreement in good faith. For the negotiating parties, these donor commitments represented something tangible that went beyond emergency food aid. Each of the negotiating parties could use this support to gain the backing of their constituents for peace agreement.

In 1979 the British government convened a conference at Lancaster House in London and orchestrated a settlement to end the war and transfer power to majority-rule, while providing some security for the European minority. While the British played the central role, the United States closely supported their efforts by providing incentives at critical junctures. Land was the core issue for the Patriotic Front, the coalition of militant liberation movements, and it almost sidelined the peace process. To overcome the impasse, President Carter pledged to contribute a considerable aid package once there had been a successful outcome in negotiations. U.S. officials insisted that the money was not designed to buy out white-owned farms, but to be used for broader development purposes, such as increasing agricultural production or boosting educational and job opportunities to the majority. This incentive encouraged Patriotic Front leaders Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo to sign on to participate in the Lancaster House peace process. In return, the new majority government would provide certain guarantees to the white-minority community. It was stipulated that for a ten-year period that land ownership in Zimbabwe could only be transferred on a "willing seller, willing buyer" basis, which was opposed by some as effectively limiting the extent of land reform.
Furthermore, in an effort to reassure the Europeans community, it was allotted a parliamentary quota of twenty seats, far exceeding its actual percentage of the population.

During much of the initial post-settlement period, the United States was Zimbabwe’s primary aid donor, contributing more than the UK and the EC combined. American aid represented a substantial commitment, three hundred million dollars over six years (1980-1985), peaking in 1982 at seventy-five million dollars (See Table 2). Ninety-two percent of this aid was in the form of reconstruction and development grants and twenty-three million dollars in emergency food aid (8%). However, in July 1986, the U.S. government decided to discontinue future bilateral aid to Zimbabwe because of a continuing pattern of highly inflammatory anti-American statements by the Zimbabwean government in the United Nations and elsewhere. Additionally on the domestic front, the Zimbabwe parliament, which was effectively controlled by President Mugabe and his party (ZANU-PF), moved in an authoritarian direction, revised the constitution by replacing the office of prime minister with an executive presidency, and abolishing the twenty parliamentary seats reserved for the white minority.

**Pattern 2: Short-Term, Emergency Relief Response**

Wars cause an enormous amount of human suffering that often requires immediate attention. The disruption of food production and distribution, as well as a breakdown in minimal state services, can leave countless civilians in a precarious situation. This frequently leads international donors to begin providing food aid and emergency medical assistance after any conflict. Once the immediate short-term crisis is over, donors tend to shy away from costly longer-term programs of reconstruction. As will be seen in the cases of Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of
Congo (DRC), discussed below, however, this emergency relief response has a minimal impact on the behavior of the warring parties.

Table 3: U.S. Aid to Rwanda by Program Type (1990-98)

![Table 3: U.S. Aid to Rwanda by Program Type (1990-98)](image)

In the aftermath of Rwandan civil war and genocide, the international community did very little in the way of reconstruction, but instead provided large quantities of emergency food and other humanitarian supplies. As the horror began ease in July 1994, donors began to flood the country with this aid. Thousands upon thousands of tons of food aid were airlifted to Rwanda and distributed by NGOs in the days that followed the 100 days genocide. The primary American response after the mass killings was the provision of one hundred and fifty million dollars in such emergency assistance. But, no bountiful peace dividend of economic reconstruction assistance was offered to help the new Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) government in Kigali to rebuild its shattered country. Donors seemed concerned with the immediate problems of postconflict stability, such as starvation, disease, refugees, and so forth.
Rwanda conformed to the typical pattern of U.S. postconflict humanitarian relief response following civil war. This reaction involves a dramatic spike in aid in the immediate period after the signing of a peace agreement. Two or three years later, this short-term humanitarian relief dried up. This reaction is reminiscent to the manner in which international donors respond to natural disasters, such as floods or earthquakes. Concerning the relief-development continuum, Rwanda represents an extreme case. From 1993 (when the Arusha peace accord was signed between the RPF and the Habriymana government) to 1998, U.S.A.I.D. provided four hundred and eighty-seven million dollars; four hundred forty-three million dollars (91%) of which was emergency food aid. An additional eight percent was development assistance and one percent was for the child survival and disease fund. Most of this aid was not designed to be a long-term commitment and by 1998, most of it had been distributed. Unlike Zimbabwe and South Africa, Rwanda provides a pattern of a typical short-term, emergency relief operation.
Sierra Leone presents a similar response to that of Rwanda. More than decade of civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002) had devastated and traumatized an already deeply impoverished country. The principal rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (R.U.F.) had displayed a great capacity for brutality. Its fighters became notorious for their highly coercive methods of recruiting of child soldiers, the looting and destroying of rural communities, and worst of all, their terror tactics against civilians that involved the amputation of limbs and systematic rape. The conflict caused an estimated 20,000 to 75,000 war-related deaths, with roughly half of the country’s population internally displaced or living as refugees outside the country. The prime motivation behind the war in Sierra Leone was to maintain control over the country’s diamond fields, with the rebels seeking control of the state in order to advance this end.
Although fighting did take place in the diamond-producing areas in the east of the country, the most brutal warfare centered around the capital, Freetown. This reached a high point after a military coup led by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) removed the civilian Kabbah-government from power. As the international community’s concern grew, Nigerian armed forces led an intervention force of West African peacekeepers, the West African Cease-fire Monitoring Group (E.C.O.M.O.G.), in 1998, and expelled the AFRC forces and their R.U.F. allies from Freetown and put Kabbah back in power. However, E.C.O.M.O.G. control proved tenuous and the AFRC/R.U.F. rebels held out in the north and in the diamond producing areas to the east. For over a year, the rebels wreaked havoc on the capital, attempting to storm it on a number of occasions reprises. E.C.O.M.O.G. forces eventually got the temporary upper hand, and this allowed the United Nations to move in and broker a peace accord.

The subsequent Lomé Peace Agreement was signed by President Kabbah and the R.U.F. leader, Foday Sankoh in July 1999. The deal consisted of an offer to have the Kabbah government share political power with the R.U.F.. Under the Lomé agreement, Sankoh was pardoned of treason, granted the status of vice president, and given the chairmanship of a Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources. This was clearly an attempt to purchase his support. Lomé also called for the presence of an international peacekeeping force initially run by E.C.O.M.O.G. and then by the U.N.. The U.N. Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (U.N.A.M.S.I.L.) in 1999, with an initial force of 6,000 troops. The E.C.O.M.O.G. forces departed in April 2000 and the U.N.A.M.S.I.L. force reached a peak of 17,500 troops in 2002.
Almost immediately, however, the R.U.F. began to violate the terms of the agreement, most notably by holding hundreds of U.N.A.M.S.I.L. personnel hostage and seizing their arms and ammunition. This situation ended when some 800 British special forces and paratroopers arrived to evacuate British citizens and secure Freetown’s airport. Their role was rapidly expanded to include assisting the Sierra Leone government and U.N. forces fighting the rebels, as well as in the hunting down and capturing of rebel leaders. With the intervention of British troops, Sierra Leone’s armed forces and U.N. peacekeepers were able to deploy gradually throughout the country in 2001. In January 2002, the war was declared over and on May 14, 2002, the country peacefully re-elected Kabbah to the presidency. The R.U.F.’s political wing failed to win a single seat in the new parliament.

U.S.A.I.D.’s response to the end of civil war in Sierra Leone is reminiscent of its reaction towards Rwanda several years before, that is to say, it provided short-term, emergency relief aid. Over the first four years after the signing of the Lomé accord, U.S.A.I.D.’s response consisted almost exclusively (80%) of humanitarian assistance. The U.S. was the leading bilateral provider of humanitarian aid for Sierra Leone in the first three years after the Lomé peace accord, with development assistance accounting for only eight percent of aid. In all, U.S.A.I.D. contributed one hundred and twenty-one million dollars to Sierra Leone between 1999 and 2002. Nevertheless, United States relief assistance was cut drastically after the 2002 elections, and was not followed up with an increase in reconstruction or development aid.16
The outbreak of fighting in the DRC in August 1998 produced the first pan-African war, involving eight sovereign states and ten separate guerrilla armies. The vacuum left by the imploding Congolese state also had an important impact on civil wars in seven neighboring countries. A study by the International Rescue Committee estimated that between August 1998 (when the war erupted) and the end of 2002 at least 3.3 million people had died. That equates to approximately 2,000 war-related deaths every day for four years, making the war in the DRC the most deadly since World War II.

With the signing of the Lusaka Cease-Fire Agreement in July 1999, donors soon began to distribute humanitarian aid across the DRC. At this time, millions of people were displaced across the country, many of them beyond the reach of humanitarian agencies. In 2000, the U.N. deployed M.O.N.U.C., a small cease-fire monitoring body made of several thousand peacekeepers throughout parts of the country. Fighting
remained a constant factor in the east, even after all of the major warring factions had signed a power-sharing agreement in December 2002 and of the foreign armies had largely withdrawn. This fighting hampered humanitarian relief efforts.

U.S.A.I.D. provided one hundred eleven million dollars in emergency relief aid during the first three years immediately following the cease-fire (1999 to 2002). The bulk of this aid consisted of helping to provide a healthcare infrastructure, reestablishing stable food supplies, and dealing with the vast numbers of internally displaced persons. As Mark Bellamy, the former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, testified to Congress, “This aid was mostly directed at emergency food relief, including operation of humanitarian aircraft outside areas of government control, food security programs, and improving health services. We have also provided money for programs targeting refugees and internally displaced persons in the DRC.” However, as the figure above indicates, very little of U.S. support came in the form of long-term development aid. This was not unique to the American response. The U.N. indicates that over eighty-two percent of all international assistance to the Congo was food aid and emergency medical assistance.19

The donor response to the DRC has generally been weak. The Congo is a vast country, (56 million inhabitants over 2.3 million square kilometers) much of which remains virtually inaccessible. Regardless of its sheer size and large population, American assistance to the DRC has been remarkably small, slightly below that of Sierra Leone (5.7 million people living on just 71 thousand square kilometers). Such a small aid package in the DRC did not create a strong enough incentive to get the various
warring parties to begin negotiating, especially as most of the parties had established lucrative business ventures illegally exporting the Congo’s abundant natural resources.  

**Pattern 3: No Post-War Response**

The third pattern examined focuses on a case, Eritrea, where the U.S. government did not extend any significant increase in aid after the termination of its border war with Ethiopia. This appears to have had little effect on the actions of the Eritrean leadership before or after the conflict.

![Table 6: U.S. Aid to Eritrea by Program Type (1993-02)](image)

Eritrea and Ethiopia began fighting in May 1998. The two-year conflict resulted in 100,000 deaths, much of it in trench warfare reminiscent of World War I.  

The conflict centered on a few hundred square miles of sparsely populated territory around Badme, as well as along two other fronts, the Tsonora-Zalambessa area in the central border area, and the Bure area in the eastern border region. The relations between the two neighbors began to deteriorate when Ethiopia accused Eritrea of invading a border
zone that was under Ethiopian administration. The Eritreans claimed that the land in question was rightfully theirs, ceded by Ethiopia to Italy, colonial state, in 1902. This conflict resulted in two years of brutal warfare and the undermining of food security in both countries. Hostilities were formally ended with the signing an internationally brokered peace agreement on December 12, 2000 in Algiers. The negotiations took place under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations, with the United States and the European Union providing support for to the negotiation and implementation processes.

Following the conclusion of fighting, American development cooperation to Eritrea increased very little. The only reaction from U.S.A.I.D., as show in Figure 6, was an increase in emergency food aid by several million dollars. The U.S. offered a total of only fifty million dollars between 1999 and 2002, much less than it typically granted to Eritrea before the war. One of the more devastating results of the Ethiopia-Eritrea war was the undermining of food security in the region. The situation was made worse by the fact that the end of the conflict coincided with an exceptionally severe drought. The World Food Program estimated that, because of erratic rains, food production in Eritrea dropped 80% from 2001 to 2002, putting millions at risk.22

American development cooperation to Eritrea, following the 1998-2000 war, presents a null case, involving little in the way of a peace dividend. Although the overall amount of aid is very small, the structure of this post-war aid was rather evenly distributed across types of assistance. Forty-one percent, or twenty-two million dollars, was earmarked for development projects (i.e., employment, education, demobilization, and so forth).23 Fifty-nine percent of U.S. assistance to Eritrea focused on short-term
needs, with nineteen million dollars provided for the rehabilitation of the healthcare system and eleven million dollars in food aid. American commitment to Eritrea seems much weaker than as in the other cases examined in this chapter, in getting Eritrea to negotiate with Ethiopia in Algiers in 2000.

**Conclusion:**

The assumption that expectations of increased economic aid will follow the signing of a peace agreement appears logical. The prospect of a larger inflow of relief and development assistance after the war has ended as an inducement to the adversaries to act in an accommodative manner at the bargaining table. The agreement to end the war brings widespread hopes on the part of the exhausted rivals that a peace dividend will follow. But in four of the six African cases examined here, there is little evidence that a short-term spike in U.S. relief aid was followed by a significant rise in development assistance. And in the case of Eritrea, the data shows little in the way of a peace dividend as such. One can only guess to why the Pattern 1 cases (South Africa and Zimbabwe) received more generous U.S. aid allocations during their peace negotiation and implementation process than the four Pattern 2 and 3 cases. We assume that U.S. policymakers accorded these states a higher priority in their long-term relations because of their more central role as influential states that were regarded as critical to continued stability and future international trade and investment opportunities. But, whatever the true explanation, they stand out as exceptions in an otherwise disappointing performance in terms of long-term development assistance after intense conflicts.
Notes:


7  Bratton and Lansberg, 2000, p.266


10  Bratton and Lansberg, 2000, p.268


13  Rothchild, 1997, p.178


