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Economic Agendas in Civil Wars

What We Know, What We Need to Know

David M. Malone[1] and Heiko Nitzschke[2]

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Abstract

The political economy of civil wars has acquired unprecedented scholarly and policy attention. Among others, the International Peace Academy's programme on Economic Agendas in Civil Wars (EACW) has aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the complex dynamics of civil war economies and has identified areas for policy development critical for improved conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peacebuilding. While much of the earlier debate on the economic dimensions has been polarized around the 'greed versus grievance' dichotomy, there is now a better understanding of how economic dynamics can influence the onset, character, and duration of armed conflicts. This paper discusses key research findings and their policy relevance, provides a preliminary assessment of policy efforts to address the economic dimensions of conflict and conflict transformation, and offers some issues for further research and policy action.

Keywords: civil war, conflict prevention, human security

JEL classification: F02, H56, O10

[1] Assistant Deputy Minister (Global Issues), Foreign Affairs Canada, email: david.malone@international.gc.ca; [2] Senior Programme Officer (2002-2004), Economic Agendas in Civil Wars (EACW) Program, International Peace Academy, email: heiko.nitzschke@diplo.de.

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Katajanokanlaituri 6 B, 00160 Helsinki, Finland

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1 Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, the political economy of civil wars has acquired unprecedented relevance for scholars and policymakers as important to preventing and mitigating armed conflict. The issue is now under scrutiny by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), research institutes, humanitarian and aid organizations, governments, international financial organizations (IFIs), and, importantly, the United Nations (UN).

This paper provides a *tour d'horizon* of this field, based largely on the research findings and policy debates that have emerged from the International Peace Academy's three-year project on Economic Agendas in Civil Wars (EACW), which concluded in 2004.

We first present an overview of the policy and research factors that led to the launch of the EACW programme. We then discuss our findings and their policy implications, which were informed by a growing body of research elsewhere. The next section analyses some policy options. Issues for further research and policy action are offered in the concluding section.

2 Economic dimensions of intrastate conflict: an evolving research and policy agenda

The emergence of the political economy of civil war as a research agenda resulted from a convergence of political factors, policy concerns, and academic interests in the early to mid-1990s.[1] Against the significant shifts in the post-cold war global and economic order, some analysts had come to speak of qualitatively distinct, 'new wars' characterized by economic predation and increasing civilian casualties (Kaldor 1999; Duffield 2001; Berdal 2003). 'Perhaps more than any single factor, [the] new focus on the economics of intrastate conflicts was prompted by an observable increase in the *self-financing* nature of combatant activities' (Ballentine and Sherman 2003a: 1). Faced with a decline in superpower support, both government and rebel combatants sought alternative sources of revenue to sustain their military campaigns, often through trade in legally or illegally exploited natural resources, smuggling of contraband and drugs, and the capture of diaspora remittances. The resulting 'war economies' thrive on links with arms brokers, transnational criminal networks, corrupt governments, and certain corporations, reaching well beyond war zones to the world's commodity markets and major financial centres (Duffield 1999; Jean and Rufin 1996).

Given the important role of natural resources as a source of combatant financing, the term 'resource wars' soon gained currency (Cilliers 2000; Renner 2002; Klare 2001). Examples abound. During Cambodia's civil war, both the government and the Khmer Rouge experienced few difficulties selling rubies and high-grade tropical timber on world markets (Le Billon 2000a). Liberia's warlord-turned-president Charles Taylor was able to export large quantities of rubber, timber, and diamonds to finance his violent rebellion and subsequent incursion into Sierra Leone (Ellis 1999); in Colombia, guerrillas and paramilitaries have increasingly engaged in the production and trafficking of drugs (Richani 2002). Perhaps nowhere was the humanitarian price of these

1 Parts of this section draw on Malone and Sherman (2005).

developments more evident than in Angola, where revenue from oil and diamond exploitation generated huge profits for the rival elites but contributed to enormous loss of life and crippling poverty for most Angolans (Cilliers and Dietrich 2000).

Within the policy community, the Canadian Foreign Ministry developed an early interest in the role of economic factors in civil wars. A Global Issues Bureau was created in 1995, which sought to connect policy areas believed relevant to contemporary conflict, including human rights, humanitarian issues, crime and terrorism, and post-conflict peacebuilding. Then-Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy was deeply engaged in developing a 'human security' agenda, focused on the protection of individuals rather than primarily that of state interests. With its election to the UN Security Council for a term in 1999-2000, the Canadian government focused on the reform of UN sanctions, which had proliferated during the 1990s. These sanctions regimes often achieved the opposite of their intended effect—humanitarian crises deepened, while dictatorial regimes became more entrenched (and enriched on the proceeds of black market dealings) in part through sanctions evasion.[2]

In January 1999, Canada took over the chairmanship of the Council's somnolent Angola Sanctions Committee, responsible for the monitoring of 'targeted' sanctions against the rebels of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by Jonas Savimbi (Angell 2004). In May 1999, Canada's Ambassador to the UN, Robert Fowler, commissioned an in-depth independent study by a panel of experts on the taxonomy of sanctions-busting in Angola. Borrowing well-honed tactics of advocacy organizations, the resulting report 'named and shamed' not only Belgian, Ukrainian, and Israeli businessmen and arms traffickers but also sitting heads of state—the presidents of Togo and Burkina Faso—for their involvement in the trafficking of diamonds and weapons in violation of the sanctions (UN 2000).[3] For the UN, these shock tactics were novel and, to many, unwelcome. But expert panels established for subsequent of sanctions regimes and related economic strategies were to make ample use of such instruments, drawing on NGO, academic and forensic financial and economic research (Vines 2004).

During the same period, a body of studies illuminating the economic 'drivers' of contemporary civil wars was emerging from the United Kingdom (UK) (Berdal and Keen 1997; Keen 1998). Until then, most scholarly writing on civil conflict after the cold war tended to concentrate on the costs of conflict and to treat civil war as a disruption of 'normal' social, economic, and political patterns within society.[4] 'Peace' and 'war' had been understood as distinct categories, the latter being viewed as inherently dysfunctional.[5] This dichotomy has a long tradition in western thinking and influenced the way international organizations approached civil wars. Scholars such David Keen by contrast demonstrated that far from being irrational, violence often

2 See the seminal study by Cortright and Lopez (2000), as well as Cortright and Lopez (2002). The Swiss, German, and Swedish government-sponsored Interlaken, Bonn-Berlin, and Stockholm processes have generated useful recommendations for improved sanctions design and enforcement.

3 Particularly in these early days, UN expert panels drew heavily on admirable investigative work by Global Witness and Partnership Africa Canada. See Global Witness (1998) and Smilie, Gberie and Hazleton (2000).

4 For example, Brown and Rosecrane (1999).

5 Cf. Keen (2001).

serves both political and economic functions for combatants, civilians, and external actors.[6] Keen saw many of these conflicts as 'the continuation of economics by other means' (Keen 1998: 11, and Keen 2001).[7] Where there is more to war than winning, those benefiting from violence may often have a vested economic interest in the conflict's perpetuation, posing major challenges to international peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts (Berdal 1996; Collier 1994).

Against this background, in 1999 the International Peace Academy, the Centre for International Studies at Oxford University, the governments of Canada, the UK, and others, organized a conference in London on 'economic agendas in civil wars'. Bringing together leading academics and practitioners, including Paul Collier, David Keen, Mark Duffield, and Will Reno, the meeting aimed to improve the understanding of the political economy of armed conflict by examining the economic motivations and commercial agendas of contending factions; to assess how globalization creates new opportunities for these elites; and to examine the policy responses available to external actors, including governments, international organizations, NGOs and the private sector, to shift the economic agendas of elites in civil wars towards peace.[8]

With hindsight, these objectives were too ambitious for a single conference. The following year, work in this area was passed from the UK and Canadian governments to the International Peace Academy in New York, which established a three-year research and policy development project on Economic Agendas in Civil Wars (EACW) to probe further into the research and policy questions that had emerged at the London conference.[9]

The EACW project evolved in parallel with and was informed by other research projects, including the World Bank's work on 'The Economic of Civil War, Crime and Violence', UNU-WIDER's research on the 'Origins of Humanitarian Emergencies' in partnership with Queen Elizabeth House at Oxford University,[10] as well as its research project on 'Why Some Countries Avoid Conflict While Others Fail', and the Fafo Institute's 'Economies of Conflict' project on the role of private sector actors in war economies. Numerous research and advocacy organizations have since added a 'war economy-dimension' to their agendas.[11]

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6 Keen's early research on violence and political dysfunction in Sierra Leone was critical in spurring Ottawa to spearhead further work on the economics of civil wars. These topics are fully explored in his soon to be published volume (2005) *The Best of Enemies: Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone.*

7 For similar functionalist perspectives, see also Chabal and Daloz (1999), Reno (1995), and Reno (1998).

8 Views and findings aired at the conference were subsequently published in Berdal and Malone (2000).

9 The British and Canadian governments were joined in funding for the EACW programme by Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, the Rockefeller Foundation, the UN Foundation, and the International Development Research Center (IDRC). The total budget was US$2.7 million. For more information on the EACW programme, see www.ipacademy.org (completed programmes).

10 Two volumes emerged from this research project, see Nafziger, Stewart and Väyrynen (2000).

11 These include, *inter alia*, International Alert, the Bonn International Center on Conversion (BICC), the International Peace Information Service (IPIS), Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Oxfam America, as well as the Center for Public Integrity.

3 Research and policy development: findings and policy implications

The EACW programme's research agenda addressed four assumptions that reflected thinking in this field in 1999: that economic factors are consequential to combatants' decision to pursue war or seek peace; that economic 'greed' of rebels is the major cause of conflict, not socioeconomic or political 'grievances'; that resource-rich countries are more prone to armed conflict than others; and that local war economies and conflict dynamics are affected by their linkages with global commodity and financial markets.

The programme was organized into two interrelated research phases. The first focused primarily on country case research involving both secessionist and anti-secessionist insurgencies to gain understanding of the motives of combatant groups and of conflict dynamics.[12] The second research phase focused on policy development.[13]

3.1 Beyond greed and grievance: country case research[14]

Of the early writing on the economic dimensions of violence and armed intrastate conflict, none was more influential—if controversial—than the 'greed thesis' by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler.[15] Much of the academic debate became polarized around the *greed* versus *grievance* dichotomy in explaining civil war put forward in their articles. Among the many important findings of their econometric work, the most widely reported was that natural resource dependence (measured in terms of primary commodity exports as part of GDP) is correlated with a higher risk of conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 1998; Collier and Hoeffler 2000/2003). This was interpreted to suggest that resources provide the motivation or opportunity for rebels to finance their military campaigns through resource predation. That rebels can 'do well out of war' was advanced as better explaining the onset of conflict than sociopolitical grievances, such as income inequalities, ethnicity, or lack of political participation (Collier 2000a).

The greed thesis had a tremendous impact on policy discourse, easily bridging the often-deplored chasm between quantitative research and policymaking (see Mack 2002). Collier's findings were particularly appealing to policymakers discouraged by the complexity and seeming intractability of 'ethnic' and religious conflicts of the early 1990s. If many contemporary conflicts are driven by contests over economic resources, these 'resource wars' might be more amenable to resolution than conflicts over such identity issues as ethnicity, religion, or ideology (Ballentine 2003: 274).

Among academics, however, Collier's findings met with more scepticism. Several other quantitative studies pointed to methodological questions over the natural resource dependency-conflict correlation (see Sambanis 2002; de Soysa 2002; Ross 2004a). The

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12 The country cases were Colombia, Kosovo, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, Papua New Guinea, Angola, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The studies were published as Ballentine and Sherman (2003b).

13 Assessments of numerous policy and legal mechanisms to address the role of natural resources in civil wars will be published as Ballentine and Nitzschke (2005b).

14 This section draws on Ballentine and Sherman (2003b) and Ballentine and Nitzschke (2003).

15 According to Fearon (2004: 2), 'the study's main finding and the author's interpretation of it may be the most widely reported result of any cross-national statistical study of civil war, *ever*'.

dataset used in Collier's work, for instance, does not include diamonds and narcotic crops (see Fearon 2004: 4), which were often cited in the 'war economies' literature (and in World Bank press releases) as the loot of greedy rebels. Michael Ross concluded that 'the claim that primary commodity exports are linked to civil war appears fragile and should be treated with caution' (Ross 2004a).

Among country experts and comparative scholars, particularly from the developing world, there was uneasiness over Collier's dismissal of political, social and other grievances as 'rebel discourse' not to be trusted.[16] Country case studies, including those commissioned by the EACW project, found economic motivation or opportunity of rebel groups not to be the main factor for the onset of the conflicts analysed. Rather, the onset of violent conflict was triggered by the interaction of economic motives with long-standing grievances over the mismanagement or inequitable distribution of resource wealth, exclusionary and repressive political systems, inter-group disputes, and security dilemmas exacerbated by unaccountable and ineffective states (Ballentine 2003; Ballentine and Nitzschke 2003; Nafziger and Auvinen 2003).

The studies also highlighted the explanatory limits and a worrying degree of state-bias of 'rebel-centric' studies on the economic dimensions of conflicts. We found that the correlation between natural resource dependency and conflict risk is not a direct relationship; neither is the opportunity for rebellion merely a function of the presence of such resources in a given country (Ballentine 2003: 261-7). Both qualitative and quantitative studies confirm that critical governance failure by the state appears to be the mediating variable between resource abundance and the risk of armed conflict. Systemic corruption and economic mismanagement, patrimonial rule, and the political and socioeconomic exclusion of ethnic or other minority groups ('horizontal inequalities'), are permissive factors conducive to the onset of both separatist and non-separatist conflicts.[17].

EACW research confirmed two key relationships between resource wealth and armed conflict, posited by studies on the so-called 'resource curse' (Karl 1997; Gelb *et al.* 1988; Ross 1999; Ross 2001; Leite and Weidmann 1999; Ascher 1999; Gary and Karl 2003). First, mismanagement of resource wealth may create grievances that—particularly when fused with a history of ethno-secessionist tendencies—may become permissive factors for armed conflict. The inequitable sharing of revenues from natural resources (or the perception thereof) is a major factor in separatist conflicts such as in Papua New Guinea, Nigeria, and Sudan (Alao and Olonisakin 2001; Herbst 2001; ICG 2002; Regan 2003). Second, the resource curse can corrode state institutions, with important implications for armed conflict. 'Unearned' resource rents that allow elites to buy security through corrupt patrimonial networks**,** rather than through the establishment of a 'social contract' based on the tax-financed provision of public goods and services, may in the long run undermine the regime's legitimacy and relative military, political, and economic strength, rendering it vulnerable to rebellion (Le Billon 2003; Addison and Murshed 2002; Moore 2000; Reno 2000: 43-8; Reno 2002). The weaker the state, such as in Sierra Leone, Nepal, and Zaire/DRC, the more feasible

[16] See Porto (2002); Alao and Olonisakin (2001); Herbst (2000); Cramer (2002); Hutchful and Aning (2004); Addison and Murshed (2003).

[17] See Fearon and Laitin (2003); Sachs and Warner (2001); Stewart (2002); Cater (2003); Nafziger and Auvinen (2003).

becomes rebellion—whether to reform the kleptocratic patrimonial system or simply to grab a slice of the pie.

While our findings do not support a direct causal relationship between economic motives and opportunities and the *onset* of armed conflict, they do confirm that economic factors, including access to natural resources and other sources of finance, can have important consequences for the *character* and *duration* of conflicts, as well as on efforts to end war (Ballentine 2003). Studies that analysed the types of natural resources, their modes of exploitation, the way their benefits accrued to conflict stakeholders, and the distinct impacts of these issues on conflict dynamics and types of conflict were particularly useful (Le Billon 2001a; Ross 2003; Ross 2004b; Snyder nd). Furthermore, conflicts that start as political rebellions can mutate over time as economic considerations become equally or even more important to some combatants than political aspirations. The Angolan conflict, the quintessential 'resource war', for instance, had its roots in an anti-colonial struggle and resource predation became relevant only in the latter stages of the conflict. Similarly, gemstones or drugs became a prominent source of rebel self-financing in the grievance-driven conflicts in Burma, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Colombia, Peru, and the DRC only *after* fighting there had broken out (Ross 2004b).

Many contemporary conflicts have become systemically criminalized, particularly where access to lucrative assets exists. Today's combatants (both rebels and governments) have increasingly engaged in illegal economic activities either directly or through links with international criminal networks engaged in the trafficking of arms and drugs, smuggling, and money laundering (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2003: 16-7). The degree to which combatants move in and out of criminality varies. In Colombia both the guerrilla groups and paramilitaries engage in narco-trafficking and money laundering, as well as kidnapping and extortion. In African conflicts, such as the DRC, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Angola, rebel groups have tended to work with shadowy 'conflict entrepreneurs' attracted by the high profit margins and the lack of regulation and law enforcement in these conflict zones.

Case study research furthermore highlights the importance of business actors as intermediaries between local war economies and global commodity and financial markets (Le Billon 2001b; Raeymaekers and Cuvalier 2002; Swanson 2002, Global Witness 2002). Companies, especially in the extractive industries, can willingly or unintentionally contribute to conflict dynamics. The anarchic environment of conflict zones also opens up business opportunities for 'rogue companies', those usually small firms that use conflict as a cover for operations and that in some cases actively supply combatants (Taylor 2002). The regulation of business actors may thus be an important tool for conflict prevention and resolution (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2004).

'War economies' in fact serve different functions for different conflict stakeholders. In addition to combatant elites, war economies can provide benefits for civilian populations where the informal economy is widespread and where traditional livelihoods are destroyed during conflict (Mwanasali 2000; Pugh 2002; Goodhand 2004). Artisanal diamond mining activities in Sierra Leone, coca and poppy cultivation in Colombia and Afghanistan, as well as diaspora remittances in Sri Lanka, Kosovo, and Nepal have become critical sources of survival for the civilian population. While often under predatory control of rebel forces, civilian incomes from these activities sustain livelihoods and compensate for the state's failure to provide basic services.

Lastly, the economic activities of belligerents may become powerful barriers to war termination for several reasons. Income from the exploitation of lucrative resources and combatant remuneration in the form of licence to loot and pillage may be important factors in the fragmentation of both militaries and rebel groups (Ballentine 2003: 270). In the DRC, the number of rebel groups—financed in part through the exploitation of coltan and alluvial gold in the Kivu provinces—increased steadily throughout the conflict and its ongoing violent afterlife (Grignon 2005). Resource predation can also create command and control problems among combatant groups. An example is the oft-cited 'sobel' phenomenon ('soldiers by day, rebels by night') witnessed in Angola and Sierra Leone where soldiers frequently colluded with rebels for personal gain in the diamond-rich areas, with negative consequences for military discipline and the civilian population (Reno 1998: 126-7; Adebajo 2002; Keen 1998: 20; Sherman 2003). In such circumstances, it can be harder for leaders to impose peace agreements on their rank-and-file followers.

Revenues generated through resource predation and shadow economies can also exacerbate what Stephen Stedman (1997) has termed the 'spoiler' problem (see also Zahar 2003). Spoilers have a range of motives for opposing peace agreements—from unmet political aspirations, to personal grudges, to ideological or religious convictions. However, spoilers operate most effectively where sources of self-financing (or outside support) are readily available. A comparative study of sixteen peace settlements between 1980 and 1997 confirmed that two of the main factors in failed peace implementation were the proliferation of combatant parties and the continued availability of valuable natural resources (Downs and Stedman 2003).[18]

3.2 Some policy implications from the research

These findings have important implications. At a minimum, they caution against extensive reliance on econometric modelling or 'resource reductionist' approaches to explaining contemporary armed conflict (Cater 2003). While many economic activities, and particularly the exploitation of natural resources, contribute to hostilities, they do so in a diffuse and indirect way. In addition, policymakers need be wary of a state-bias. Resource predation can benefit governments as well as rebel groups. Bringing state motives and behaviour back into the equation highlights the importance of transparent, equitable, and accountable resource management for conflict prevention and peacebuilding (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2003; Nitzschke and Studdard 2005).

The increasing criminality of today's conflicts presents policymakers with a dilemma. For some observers, contemporary insurgent groups are comparable, at least in theory, to criminal organizations (Collier 2000b). But should policymakers treat them as such? However much insurgency and criminality may overlap, they are not the same. Whereas criminal organizations employ violence in the sole pursuit of profit, combatant groups engage in illicit trade and economic predation at least in part to pursue military and political goals (Williams and Picarelli 2005). Casting rebellions simply as a criminal endeavour rather than a political phenomenon obscures legitimate grievances and forecloses opportunities for negotiated resolution of the conflict if strategies of

18 Similarly, Michael Doyle and Nicolas Sambanis find in their quantitative study that primary commodity exports are negatively associated with the success of peacebuilding efforts in 124 wars that occurred between 1945 and 1997. See Doyle and Sambanis (2000).

prosecution or military defeat are preferred over mediation (Ballentine 2003: 270-1; Gutiérrez Sanin 2003). The dangers of this approach are compounded in the current climate of the 'war against terrorism', in which yesterday's 'rebels' have become today's 'criminal terrorists'.

Policy needs to be sensitive to the different functions that war economies may serve to their participants. Some engage in the war economy to finance the war effort, others for personal enrichment. Yet others are forced to participate to secure their survival. It is important to address the functions of the shadow economy that benefit the enemies of peace and stability, but also those aspects socially beneficial to civilian dependants (Pugh 2002; Woodward 2002).

For policy development, the key question deriving from all the previous ones is how to make peace more profitable than war. This is what our second track of work focused on.

4 Policy development: managing the resource dimension of armed conflict

The EACW programme focused on policy development conducted along two vectors: an assessment of the regulatory and legal mechanisms on offer to the international community to address the economic dimensions of conflict; and the impact of the regional dimensions of conflicts, as well as the legacies of war economies on conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding.[19]

4.1 Assessing and promoting global regulatory practices and legal dimensions to address the economic dimension of armed conflict

As we have seen, the self-financing nature of many contemporary civil wars has drawn attention to the connection between the trade in natural resources, global financial flows, and armed conflict. Consequently, curtailing and managing these resource flows through 'control regimes' has become a matter of increasing interest (Cooper 2002; Bannon and Collier 2004). The EACW programme's work in this field was premised on a number of observations from expert meetings and workshops: the need for a strategy to coordinate existing and emerging policy mechanisms that can address globally and regionally networked war economies; the inadequacy of current private sector voluntary approaches to promote responsible corporate behaviour in conflict-prone and war-torn countries; and the potential of international law to address the problem of combatant and corporate exploitation and trade in conflict goods (Sherman 2002a).

We endeavoured to assess relevant and promising policy, regulatory, legal, and market-based mechanisms (see Ballentine and Nitzschke 2005b). The rationale underlying resource and finance control regimes, including UN sanctions and commodity certification regimes, is fairly straightforward: if conflicts thrive on the trade in 'conflict goods', then curtailing these resource flows may help prevent or resolve conflict. The same, then, should hold true for efforts aimed at attacking organized and 'white collar' crime, and the financial lifelines of combatants—all closely linked to local war

19 This section of the paper draws in part on Ballentine (2004a) and Nitzschke (2003).

economies in the form of arms and drugs trafficking, diaspora remittances, money laundering, corruption, and, possibly, terrorist finance.

In addition, the programme focused on policy instruments to minimize the negative role of private sector actors in zones of conflict. Important insights were gained from a private sector working group that included company representatives and other experts in this field. Off-the-record discussions allowed for frank discussions and identified some legitimate concerns of company representatives (see Sherman 2001 and 2002b).

Policy development in this field need not be undertaken from scratch. A range of policy, regulatory, and legal instruments exist on the national, regional, and global levels that can address war economies (and their fallout) in order to enhance conflict prevention and conflict resolution (see Le Billon, Sherman and Hartwell 2002; Bannon and Collier 2004).

Perhaps the single most robust instrument specifically deployed to curtail the flows of finances, natural resources, and arms to and from combatants is targeted sanctions (i.e., arms and commodity embargoes, travel bans, and financial freezes) imposed by the UN Security Council. An innovative mechanism to improve sanctions regimes has been the establishment of *ad hoc* panels of experts, mandated by the Security Council to monitor sanctions against the RUF in Sierra Leone, the regime of Charles Taylor in Liberia, the Taliban and, later, Al-Qaida, and, most recently, to monitor the arms embargoes in Somalia and in eastern DRC. Starting with the groundbreaking Angola Monitoring Mechanism in 2000, expert panels and their investigative reports to the Security Council have by now become a routine instrument of 'non-coercive diplomacy'.[20]

As to whether sanctions have contributed to conflict resolution, the jury is still out. Clearly, weapons and commodity embargoes raise the opportunity costs for those targeted; commodity sanctions and the reports by the expert panels have raised awareness of the economic dimensions of conflict; expert panel investigations have also provided important insights into the range of actors who continue to engage in sanctions busting and into the role of natural resources in fuelling war economies. However, there is increasing agreement on the technical and political limits of sanctions (even in their targeted form) as a policy instrument (Wallensteen, Staibano and Eriksson 2003). They are undermined by a demonstrated unwillingness of the Security Council to enforce them effectively and to follow up on the findings from the expert panels. For instance, secondary sanctions against neighbouring states implicated in sanctions-busting were imposed only once—in the case of Liberia (Resolution 1343) for its role as an export nation for smuggled conflict diamonds from the RUF rebels. Even well-known sanctions-busters enjoy practically unrestrained impunity, as best personified by Victor Bout, the notorious arms-trafficker featured in several expert panel reports. Bout has been quoted in a *New York Times* Magazine interview as saying 'maybe I should start an arms-trafficking university and teach a course on UN sanctions-busting' (Landesman 2003).

[20] A unique case was the Panel of Exports on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth in the Democratic Republic of Congo in that it was not linked to any sanctions regime, but was to investigate in more general terms the illicit economic activities of key actors to the DRC conflict (see United Nations 2001).

Commercial or geopolitical interests of Security Council members provide additional obstacles. In the case of Liberia, France and China, both permanent members of the Security Council with important interests in the tropical timber trade, resisted the imposition of timber sanctions against Liberia for two years. More recently, 'diplomatic' pressure was exerted by several capitals on the UN Secretariat and members of the DRC Expert Panel to clear certain companies of allegations made in the panel's final report, resulting in a much weaker text (RAID 2004). Equally worrying were the efforts by the US administration, with UK backing, to resist efforts to include Victor Bout, allegedly a supplier for coalition forces in Iraq, on a UN list of individuals subject to financial freezes for their association with Charles Taylor's former regime, himself subject to UN targeted sanctions (Turner 2004).

The certification of rough diamonds implicated in financing armed conflict through the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) is promising. Initiated in May 2000 under the chairmanship of the South African government to deny 'conflict diamonds' access to international markets, the Kimberley Process was the outcome of commercial, reputational, and humanitarian concerns among its government, industry, and civil society participants. The KPCS, which came into effect in January 2003, represents the first certification system that in a detailed manner deals with the trade in conflict goods (Grant and Taylor 2004). Despite its shortcomings with regards to, *inter alia*, independent verification and compliance monitoring, the KPCS may help address the much more widespread trade in 'illegal diamonds', which has contributed to systemic corruption, and, ultimately, violent state collapse in several countries. Usefully, while membership in the KPCS is voluntary, the Kimberley regime utilizes a combination of legal norms and market forces to encourage countries to join given that they would otherwise not be allowed to trade legally in diamonds with KPCS member states. (Smillie 2005). Following a peer review mission last year, the membership of the Republic of Congo was suspended due to lax regulation of its diamond industry.

Other regulatory frameworks—including on the suppression of money laundering, narcotics trafficking, international organized crime and high-level corruption, as well as efforts to control terrorist finance—have evolved rapidly in recent years, though not necessarily in response to civil wars. Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, these issues gained additional policy profile as part of the global fight against terrorism. Nevertheless, regulatory approaches to organized crime, especially those against drug traffickers, have a history of failure, which cautions against over-reliance on such instruments.

Targeting the finances of combatants may be a cost-effective means of influencing the behaviour of combatant elites in civil wars. Relevant technology and expertise are already available in relation to drug traffickers and terrorists groups and could be applied to belligerents. On money laundering, OECD's Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) has become the most effective international instrument. Its recently updated 40 Recommendations address issues crucial to the financial dimension of conflict and, as Jonathan Winer (2005) argues, they may even allow a direct application of the FATF's mechanisms to conflict commodities. Yet this potential remains to be tested.

Reports that Al-Qaida had laundered money by buying diamonds in West Africa establish a link between terrorism, conflict trade, and money-laundering in civil war contexts (Global Witness 2003; Farah 2004). The mandate of the UN's Counter-

Terrorism Committee (CTC), tasked with monitoring implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373 on the suppression of terrorist finance, has two possible applications to contemporary war economies. First, the international legal framework against terrorists and their financial networks may be applied to trace and curtail financial flows to combatant groups. While premature at this point, an expansion of the CTC's mandate to include also commodity trade supporting combatant groups may be possible in the long term. More promising at present are the technical assistance provisions of the CTC to assist states in developing and strengthening their financial intelligence and banking sectors, which also hold potential lessons for improved sanctions enforcement (see Eckert 2005).

The regulation of private sector activities in zones of conflict has emerged as a controversial but timely issue in the field of corporate social responsibility, human rights, and peace and security, raising the questions of whether, how, and by whom companies operating in war zones should be regulated (Lilly and Le Billon 2002; Banfield, Haufler and Lilly 2003). The debate on corporate regulation is centred on the 'voluntary versus mandatory' dichotomy, with companies, industry organizations, and governments stressing the importance of voluntary self-regulation, and NGOs, activists, and legal experts arguing for mandatory regulation. However, there is growing recognition that policy development has to take place along a continuum rather than a dichotomy, ranging from voluntary codes of conduct to corporate regulation under national and international law.[21]

Voluntary codes of conduct, such as the UN Global Compact, can be quickly adopted by companies, and in the long run may promote changes in the corporate culture and internal practices. Yet, company representatives raised several issues of concern which need to be addressed. For instance, the proliferation of voluntary codes of conduct at the firm, sector and multi-sector level has created confusion and 'code-fatigue' among companies. In the absence of clear minimal standards, companies are understandably reluctant to sign on to new initiatives for fear of moving goal posts (Ballentine 2004a: 15-6). A significant obstacle to voluntarism acknowledged by both companies and NGOs is the 'collective action problem' exposing more progressive companies to possible loss of competitive advantage. For instance, BP in Angola faced accusations of breach of contract and threats from the government in Luanda when the company announced that it planned to publicly disclose all payments made to the government. Company representatives admit that they would not repeat such a step unless their competitors did the same. Similarly, when in 2002—partly, at least, due to public pressure and shareholder activism—the Canadian company Talisman Energy and the UK company Premier Oil disinvested from Sudan and Burma respectively, their assets were bought by their state-owned joint venture partners, India's Natural Gas Corp. and Petronas from Malaysia, who did not face the same domestic pressures. While a success for NGO campaigns and shareholder action, the situation on the ground is unaffected.

This highlights the need, in some circumstances, for mandatory regulation as a complementary mechanism to voluntary self-regulation to compel more compliance by those business actors less amenable to public pressure (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2004). The potential for a legal framework that would regulate corporate activities in conflict zones has become the subject of increased interest and formed a part of the EACW

21 See Sherman (2001); Lunde and Taylor with Huser (2003); Ballentine and Nitzschke (2004).

programme's work. The OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, diverse human rights instruments, as well as international human rights and humanitarian law are relevant in this connection. Yet, there is currently little normative or conceptual, let alone legal, consensus among NGOs, academics, and legal experts as to what business activities should be subject to legal regulation. A systematic assessment of the legal liability of companies under national and international law was conducted by the EACW programme in partnership with the Fafo Institute in Norway.[22] While a legal regime may appear utopian today, the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 2002 seemed utopian even ten years ago. The announcement by that Court's chief prosecutor in 2003 to investigate the financial dimension of the crimes committed in the Eastern DRC, sent shockwaves through some boardrooms around the world and illustrated how far we have moved down the legal track.[23]

However, the creation of a robust international regulatory framework will be insufficient on its own. Control and interdiction efforts to curtail resource and financial flows to combatants face several challenges that need to be overcome.

Conflict-prone or war-torn countries typically lack the law enforcement, intelligence, and border policing capacities that are required for effective enforcement of interdiction and control regimes. There is thus an urgent need for more targeted capacity-building, possibly also as part of technical development assistance. The CTC, Kimberley Process, and the FATF regimes may provide important lessons learned in this field.

Interdiction and control regimes may have unintended consequences for conflict dynamics and key stakeholders. Interdiction tends to raise the prices of the goods it seeks to interdict—and thus also potential profit margins for conflict entrepreneurs. An obvious example is the half-hearted effort to interdict poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, a main source of income for local warlords (Burnett 2003; Rubin 2004). In Bosnia, local strongmen benefited significantly from smuggling activities in circumvention of sanctions, strengthening their influence over the country's fragile political and economic post-war institutions (Andreas 2004; Pugh 2002). In order to minimize the harm regulatory approaches may cause to the most vulnerable conflict stakeholders, sensitivity to their plight should be the *sine qua non* conditioning factor for any policy action. (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2003a: 15-6; Jackson 2005).

Corporate regulation in conflict zones may face its strongest challenge in the trade-offs that home governments face in encouraging international social and environmental responsibility by their companies. When allegations arose in 1999 that the Sudanese government used revenues derived from Canadian-based Talisman Energy's oil operations in Sudan to fund its military campaign against rebels in the south—a war that involved bombing raids against civilian villages and massive forced displacement—Canadian Foreign Minister Axworty commissioned the 'Harker Report' on human security in Sudan, which *inter alia* investigated the role of oil exploitation in the conflict. While Axworthy may have hoped the report's findings would help convince his cabinet colleagues that a halt should be put to Talisman's activities in Sudan, the

[22] The project's executive summary (IPA/Fafo 2005), a comparative survey of key national legislations, and a commentary on the legal liability of businesses are available at www.fafo.no/liabilities.

[23] This investigation is currently on the backburner, but could be revived in the future. See also Schabas (2005).

company was a major employer in Calgary, and the Canadian government seemed more sensitive to domestic job creation than to ethical considerations relating to a distant war.

Even the most robust policies to curtail resource flows to combatants may produce diminishing returns as new illicit activities and networks and means to evade detection develop. Regulation tends to be responsive rather than preemptive. Ultimately, in the absence of efforts to address the causes of conflict, regulatory efforts will primarily address the symptoms of conflicts and not their causes.

4.2 Integrating the economic dimensions of armed conflict into international peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding

Many of the research findings generated in recent years challenge core assumptions of policymakers. The notion of a 'comprehensive political settlement', used to describe many of the peace agreements brokered by the UN during the past decade, suggests that the formal end of armed hostilities marks a definite break with past patterns of conflict and violence. This has rarely been the case. The formal end of conflict in countries such as Sierra Leone, Angola, Afghanistan, the DRC, and Sudan, did not bring an end to the predatory economic relationships fostered during wartime. If left unattended, these relationships can fatally undermine subsequent efforts at peacebuilding and leave lasting developmental distortions.

Until very recently, the main focus of both conflict analysis and policy action remained on the national level. Yet, in most conflict theatres, regional factors are crucial to the onset and the character of warfare, and, consequently, for conflict resolution. Cross-border dynamics (such as invasion, refugee flows, loss of trade for neighbouring states, cross-border raids, inflows of small arms) are generally treated as 'spillover' phenomenon (Wallensteen and Sollenberg 1998; Brown 1996). Fortunately, cross-border dimensions of today's conflicts are newly seen as more systematic than previously recognized. The concept of 'regional conflict formations', which Barney Rubin defines as 'sets of transnational conflicts that form mutually reinforcing linkages with each other throughout a region, making for more protracted and obdurate conflicts' has been extremely helpful in our work (Rubin 2001).[24] The EACW work on Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, and Bosnia-Herzegovina confirmed that the war economies sustaining these conflicts thrive on deeply embedded political, military, economic, and social linkages with neighbouring state elites, informal trading networks, regional kinship and ethnic groups, arms traffickers, mercenaries, and commercial entities, each of which may have a vested economic interest in the prolongation of conflict and instability (Cooper and Pugh 2004; Studdard 2004).

Those brokering peace agreements and planning peace operations (today mostly focused on medium-term peacebuilding rather than merely short-term stabilization) within the UN and the world's capitals have become increasingly interested in the operational implications of these dynamics. At a 2003 IPA-sponsored conference on Transforming War Economies: Challenges for Peacemaking and Peacebuilding, several policy mechanisms and strategies were identified for governments, aid agencies, regional

24 The RCF concept is similar to the 'regional conflict complexes' developed by Wallensteen and Sollenberg, yet goes beyond the 'spillover' logic that underlies their work. See also Shaw (2003), and Tschirgi (2002).

organizations, IFIs, and the UN system to increase the odds for successful peacemaking and peacekeeping.[25]

Assessing the economic endowments and activities of combatants and their sponsors, will help third-party mediators to identify possible spoilers. Where politically feasible, they should seek to foster provisions for resource-sharing in peace agreements, such as in the current peace process in Sudan, which incorporates provisions for the sharing of oil revenues alongside power-sharing agreements. Closer consultation and cooperation with IFI representatives during the peace process must take place to ensure complementarity of UN and IFI strategies, as famously was not the case in El Salvador (see de Soto and Castillo 1994). This may well mean challenging some core assumptions and approaches of contemporary peacebuilding orthodoxy (Woodward 2002; Pugh 2002; Paris 2004).

The process of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants has become a standard tool of UN missions and donors in countries emerging from armed conflict. A difficult and expensive process in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, and Liberia suggests serious challenges. Where fighters have been remunerated in the form of natural resource exploitation or civilian predation, their proclivity to voluntarily disarm and return to civilian life may depend on their expectations for socioeconomic reintegration in the form of access to land, education, or other income and employment opportunities (Date-Bah 2003; Humphreys and Weinstein 2004). Reintegration assistance needs to be introduced early on to undercut the temptations for continued participation in the war economy. In Sierra Leone, for instance, many ex-combatants not reached by the UN's reintegration programme became a serious security threat, mobilizing for protest and moving to the diamond areas where they challenged local youth groups or were recruited as mercenaries for the war in Liberia (Durch *et al.* 2003: 30). For UN peacekeeping missions, renewed focus on reintegration programmes may require more coordination with humanitarian and development actors, and must be met with up-front provision of funds for 'quick impact' reintegration projects, involving job provision.

Criminal networks relating to the shadow economy are a major challenge in many post-conflict contexts (Pugh 2002; Williams and Picarelli 2005) A primary task must be strengthening law enforcement and the judicial sector as part of security sector reforms. Outside cooperation on law enforcement and mutual legal assistance, as well as direct policing by UN peace missions, can provide encouragement (TraCCC 2001). But increased attention needs to be paid to creating incentives and alternative income-generating activities for entrepreneurs and others engaged in the shadow economy to 'turn legal'. To tackle the regional shadow trade and smuggling in countries with weak border policing capacities, structural incentives for licit cross-border trade need to be created. Improved cooperation within regional and sub-regional organizations (such as ECOWAS or the Mano River Union) or through multilateral agreements are thus, in principle, very useful (Cooper and Pugh 2004: 219-38).

Where the illegal exploitation or corrupt and inequitable management of natural resources has been central to conflict dynamics, the early restoration of transparent and accountable resource governance in the post-conflict period is crucial. This requires in-

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[25] This section draws on the conference report by Nitzschke (2003), as well as on Nitzschke and Studdard (2005).

depth transformation of predatory state institutions that promote kleptocratic rent-seeking rather than socially beneficial economic activity. Clear donor strategies are needed. As experience with the Chad-Cameroon pipeline project highlights, increased technical assistance for public administration, particularly in the areas of financial oversight, budgeting, accounting, and public expenditure reviews, can and should become an integral part of donor post-conflict programmes. While the project's success is still uncertain, the issue of resource management deserves further systematic scrutiny by development and security practitioners. Experts have suggested, for instance, that a multi-stakeholder trust fund for the Ituri region in the DRC should be established to collect, monitor and allocate resource revenues as part of peacebuilding efforts in the country (Heller, Krasner, and McMillan 2003).

Loan agreements and technical aid should also feature provisions for effective legal and administrative regulation for corporate engagement in natural resource industries. The World Bank's private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), can play an important role in designing extractive industry codes and mining policies that help minimize the risk of corruption and corporate malfeasance, by, for instance, integrating transparency provisions for corporations and host governments. The IFC's open support for the 'Publish What You Pay' campaign as well as the recent announcement of the Angolan and Nigerian governments to participate in the UK-sponsored Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) provide important examples of an increased sensitivity to the issue of revenue transparency (Global Witness 2004).

5 The way ahead

Where economic factors are dominant in conflict, greater challenges for conflict prevention, peacemaking, and peacebuilding will exist. Several issues for further research and policy action are offered as concluding thoughts.

First, research findings on how economic factors impact on the causes, characteristics and duration of conflict have been useful. Quantitative studies that test theories by academics are important, yet they are likely to have only limited policy impact given their often contradictory conclusions. More systematic field-based research is needed on the political economy of armed conflict, particularly on those dynamics that suggest entry points for more effective policy action. As Ross (2004a) indicates, 'statistical correlations can only take us so far'. Whether addressing the so-called root causes of conflict, providing capacity-building for transparent and accountable resource management schemes, providing technical assistance for the establishment of a transparent financial sector, or providing alternative livelihoods to former combatants, the synergy effects between aid and security need to be more systematically analysed and reflected in policy development (Collier *et al.* 2003). Important work is underway in various organizations, such as UNU-WIDER and ODI, addressing key issues for post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding and foreign aid (Addison 2003; Carbonnier 1998; Le Billon 2000b, and Collinson 2003). An important issue for more systematic research is the political economy of security sector reform (Brömmelhörster and Paes 2003; Hendrickson and Ball 2002).

Second, a strong case has now been made for continued support by donors and other governments of policy development on the economic dimensions of conflict. The role of governments is crucial in achieving an effective, fair, and workable framework of global governance that stands a chance to effectively address the linkages between local war economies and the global consumer markets for conflict goods, be they diamonds, timber, or drugs. Governments and multilateral agencies need to improve cooperation to strengthen the conventions against transnational organized crime, terrorist funding, and the mechanisms against money laundering and corruption. In addition to corporate self-regulation, mandatory and even legal frameworks are required to effectively address corporate engagement in conflict zones.

Yet, in terms of driving the agenda forward, some degree of realism is needed. As we have seen with respect to Canada and Talisman, even the best-intentioned ideas can fall victim to the types of trade-offs that policymakers must make to accommodate diverse constituencies. Similarly, when several members of the UK Cabinet wanted to tackle the role of the UK finance sector in attracting ill-gotten gains of repressive officials from conflict areas, others countered that this should not be achieved at the risk of loosing out to financial sector rivals such as Switzerland. Real interests—and big money—are often at stake. NGO, academic and media advocates need to be aware of these factors and design strategies to overcome them that acknowledge the costs as well as the benefits of action. Here, the role of the private financial markets as a lever for change in business practice deserves further scrutiny (Mansley 2005).

Lastly, one cannot overemphasize the role of the UN system in driving the policy agenda forward. The UN Secretariat and the Security Council became engaged in issues of illicit economic behaviour during armed conflict in part serendipitously, largely through the Council's imposition of targeted commodity and financial sanctions in the 1990s. The attention that the Security Council now pays to sanctions-busting, natural resource exploitation, the Kimberley Process, and increasingly, the role of private sector activity in conflict zones, marks a recognition of the relevance of these issues to the maintenance of international peace and security. Some of this action was sparked by research and advocacy organizations, which have recently enjoyed increasing access to the Council (Paul 2004). EACW staff organized and participated in briefings for Security Council members and the Secretariat's most senior officials on conflict issues. Many delegates attended expert meetings where findings from our research were presented. The Canadian and Norwegian governments championed the issue within the UN, making use of their tenure as elected members of the Security Council in 1989-90 and 1991-92, respectively (see Guaqueta 2002). The German government, a strong supporter of the Global Compact, called a meeting during its April 2004 Council presidency on 'The Role of Business in Conflict Prevention, Peacekeeping and Post-conflict Peacebuilding' (United Nations 2004b). However, among the permanent Council members, reactions have ranged from the supportive (principally the UK) to the sceptical (for example, Russia).

The Security Council has a crucial role to play in future policy development, not only by crafting strategies to control illicit economic behaviour in civil wars, but—not least due to its 'Chapter VII power'—by establishing through its case-by-case decisions new global norms concerning such behaviour. Recognizing the detrimental role of conflict trade for collective security and conflict prevention, the recently-published report of the UN High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change recommends that 'the United Nations should work with national authorities, international financial institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector to develop norms governing the management if natural resources for countries emerging from or at risk of conflict'

(United Nations 2004a: 35). The UN Secretariat also has a strong interest in these issues, given its responsibility for designing and implementing post-conflict strategies on the ground that needs to take economic factor into greater consideration, not least in existing and upcoming peace operations in Liberia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Haiti, and the Balkans. Recently, the Secretariat has been strikingly open to academic and policy-oriented research relevant to its post-conflict work, a tribute to strong current leadership of its Political Affairs, Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Departments as well as an interest in these issues within the office of the Secretary-General (Nitzschke and Malone 2004). As the Secretary-General recently stated 'the time has come to translate ad hoc efforts into a more systematic approach' (United Nations 2004b: 4). The establishment by Kofi Annan in 2003 of the Interagency Group on the Political Economy of Armed Conflict is an important first step.

Stay tuned! This exciting field of research and policy development has been fast-moving in recent years and is likely to remain so.

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