

**The Drums of War are the Drums of Hunger**  
**A comparative analysis of the use of food as a weapon in Darfur and Somalia**

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## Declaration

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis has been to analyse which similarities exist in combatants' control over food supply lines to non-combatants in African civil conflict and evaluate whether these similarities are sufficient to permit generalisations about the use of food as a weapon in African civil conflict. The nature of this study is both descriptive and explanatory. The case studies of Darfur and Somalia form the descriptive part of this study. This thesis is also explanatory in that it aims to make a first attempt at theory building where such theory did not exist before. I try to explain if, how and why combatants intentionally use food as a means of power in civil conflict. Is the control over food a deliberate and rational choice by combatants or are situations of food scarcity and even hunger or famines simply a consequence of war?

The case studies of Darfur and Somalia provide many similarities concerning the impact of conflict on livelihoods and food security. Famine is more an issue of limited access rather than availability. The use of food as a weapon displays a number of important similarities. Attacks on food security can be divided into acts of omission, commission and provision. In Darfur, combatants exercise a greater level of control over food supply lines than in Somalia. Finally, I argue that famine in African civil conflict is highly functional and has a distinct political-economic character. The creation of famine is often deliberate, with a hidden political agenda.

In both Darfur and Somalia, attacks on food security serve a political, economic and military rationale. The political logic of attacks on food security was most important in Darfur, although here the signs of a sustainable war economy become apparent. In contrast, in Somalia, food production and procurement are attacked without the intent to destroy the livelihoods of specific societal groups, with the exception of the politically and economically marginalised groups in the south-central part of the country. The political logic is very superficial in Somalia. The level of deliberateness and organisation of attacks on food security, and hence the importance of the political logic, seem to tie in with the level of organisation of the central government, as well as with the presence or absence of a powerful ideology that clearly divides certain sections of the population from others.

I recommend that further research be undertaken to analyse if theory on resources and conflict applies to attacks on food. Furthermore, additional research is needed on how to mitigate the negative effects of Food Aid. Finally, it is valuable to investigate to what extent effective government control and/or the presence of a binding ideology affect the importance of the political logic behind the attacks on food security. To this point, this research should be extended to include more case studies, with a specific focus on the factors of governmental control, ideology and political logic.

## Opsomming

Die doel van hierdie tesis was om die ooreenkomste oor die beheer wat gewapendes oor die voedselvoorsieningslyne vir ongewapendes in Afrika se siviele konflikte te ondersoek, en om te evalueer of hierdie ooreenkomste genoegsaam is om veralgemenings te maak oor die gebruik van voedsel as 'n wapen in hierdie konflik. Die omvang van hierdie studie is beide beskrywend en verduidelikend. Die gevallestudies van Darfur en Somalia vorm die beskrywende deel van hierdie studie. Hierdie tesis is ook verduidelikend in die sin dat dit poog om 'n eerste probeerslag te skep vir die bou van teorie waar dit voorheen nog nie bestaan het nie. Hierdie studie poog om te verduidelik as, hoe en wanneer gewapendes voedselvoorrade intentioneel gebruik as 'n bron van mag in siviele konflikte. Is die beheer oor voedsel deurdagte en rationele keuse deur gewapendes, of is situasies van voedseltekorte of selfs hongersnood eenvoudig 'n gevolg van oorlogvoering?

Die gevallestudies van Darfur en Somalia bied vele ooreenkomste rakende die impak van konflik op oorlewingsmeganismes en voedselsekureit. Hongersnood is meer 'n geval van beperkte toegang, eerder as beskikbaarheid. Gebruik van voedsel as wapen het 'n aantal belangrike ooreenkomste opgelewer. Aanvalle op voedselsekureit kan opgedeel word in dade van weerhoud, kommissie en provisie. In Darfur het gewapendes 'n groter vlak van beheer oor die lyne van voedselverskaffing as in Somalia. Uiteindelik is dit die argument van hierdie tesis dat hongersnood in siviele konflik in Afrika grootliks funksioneel is en duidelike polities/ekonomiese aard is. Hierdie oorsaak van hongersnood is telkemale opsetlik met 'n gepaardgaande verskuilde politiese agenda.

In beide Darfur en Somalia het aanvalle op voedselsekureit 'n politiese, ekonomiese en militêre rationale. Die politieke aard van aanvalle op voedselsekureit was besonder opmerkbaar in Darfur, alhoewel tekens van 'n onderhoudbare oorlogseconomie duidelik begin word het. In teenstelling is voedselproduksie en versekering in Somalia onder aanval sonder die bedoeling om die lewenswyse van sekere sosiale groepe te vernietig of van stryk te bring, met die uitsondering van die politiese en ekonomiese gemarginaliseerde groepe in die suid-centrale deel van die land. Die politieke logika is baie oppervlakkig in die geval van Somalia. Die vlak van beplanning rakende aanvalle op voedselsekureit, en gepaardgaande die belang van die politieke redenasies, blyk samehorig te wees met die vlak van organisasie van die sentrale regering, asook die teenwoordigheid of afwesigheid van 'n sterk ideologie wat sekere dele van die populasie duidelik onderskei van andere.

Ek beveel aan dat verdere navorsing onderneem word om te analiseer of gepaste teorie op hulpmiddele en konflik relevant geag kan word in verband met voedselaanvalle. Verder word addisionele navorsing benodig ingevolge die beperking en kontrolering van die nuwe effekte van Food Aid. Uiteindelik is dit van pas en belangrik om die omvang van effektiewe regeringsbeheer en/of die teenwoordigheid van 'n oorkoepelende en bindende ideologie aangaande die effek daarvan op die politieke beredenerings agter die aanvalle op voedselsekureit te bestudeer. In hierdie opsig behoort hierdie navorsing uitgebrei te word om meer gevallestudies in te sluit met 'n spesifieke fokus op die individuele faktore van regeringsbeheer, ideologie en politieke redenasie.

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The title of this thesis is a South African proverb derived from *Afriprov.org: African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories*. Available online at: <<http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/weekly-african-proverbs/247-2001-weekly-african-proverbs.html>>.

# Food and Civil Conflict in Africa: An Introduction

## 1.1 Background and rationale

Much has been written about food scarcity and hunger as an effect of conflict. Especially on the African continent, where in some regions food production systems are under extreme pressures to supply the ever increasing population, conflict can have devastating effects, destabilizing these production systems not only directly but also leaving a legacy for generations to come.

To a lesser extent, there also exists a body of literature dealing with food production as a cause of war. Messer and Cohen (2006) for example identify export cropping as a possible cause of conflict, especially when export prices for these commodities are prone to fluctuations and can therefore destabilize households and the national income in general (Messer and Cohen 2006: ii). Collier and Hoeffler (2004: 588) also found that the availability of primary commodity exports substantially increases the risk of conflict. Just like in resource wars where the control over a natural resource such as diamonds is at stake, the revenues from export crops like cotton and coffee can be used by combatants to finance hostilities. This is however in many cases subject to the willingness of the importing parties to assist in the exporting process, since many conflict areas lack the geographical position or infrastructural means to transport the export commodity out of the conflict area.

Nevertheless, we find an increasing number of examples on the African continent where not the control of resources for export purposes but rather for domestic use is at stake. As Homer-Dixon (1994: 5) already noted in 1994, with the sharp increase in population numbers the pressure on the world's food production systems will become ever greater. This leads me to believe that it is highly likely that in the near future not only the control over export crops but also over regular food sources for domestic use, especially in vulnerable production systems, such as those found in Africa, will become of increasing value.

It is important to note here, however, that the rationale behind the control of these food resources is rather different than the one leading combatants to seek control over export crops or minerals. They do not try to control food supplies in order to finance their own operations but rather as a means of power over the populations they seek to control.<sup>1</sup> These food supplies can be divided into four categories. First, the local population could rely on their own food produce, second we find food purchased at local markets, third, and sadly the case in many African countries, the local population can or will have to rely on Food Aid distributed by donors such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and finally the population can be fed by what is imported from other countries, either distributed by the government or traded at the local markets.

Since the third food supply stream is provided by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), these non-state actors are increasingly drawn into the conflict, having to create alliances with military partners to protect their own safety and ensure the delivery of their food supplies to civilians. On many occasions in recent years insurgents have seized food deliveries from NGOs in order to be able to distribute (or refrain from distributing) this food themselves to civilians. Food donations specifically have therefore increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of a 'means of power' is further explained under the heading "Conceptualisations".

acquired a strategic value and the time when food donors could simply do their work and try to bring as much relief as possible to civilians in conflict situations seems to have passed. Ultimately, therefore this thesis also deals indirectly with the question what the role of NGOs is in aiding or prolonging conflict and will try to identify conditions under which these NGOs can diminish the negative side effects of their participation.

Especially considering the frequency of civil conflict on the African continent, combined with the vulnerable food supply system and the high population pressure on this system, the strategic use of food supply lines to non-combatants as a means of power seems a rational choice for combatants, especially those deprived of other ways to raise resources. It is important to give this topic the attention it deserves in order to gain insight into how food supply to non-combatants is being used as a means of power in civil conflict. Furthermore, with this research I aim to demonstrate the centrality of food in African civil conflict and the urgency to address issues of food security in order to create durable peace.

This chapter is structured as follows: Immediately below are the problem statement and the guiding research question. Thereafter, the hypothesis following from this research question is formulated, followed by some notes on the scope of the study. Subsequently, the research design and methodology of the study are presented. Next, the limitations and delimitations of the study are discussed. Central terms in the study are then conceptualised. This chapter will round off with the structure of the thesis in the form of a discussion of the following chapters.

## **1.2 Literature Review**

The strategic control of the different food supply lines to the civilian population during civil conflict is a topic that has seen surprisingly little research. The short literature review that follows is merely aimed at providing the proof to the aforementioned claim. After an extensive search for literature, I make mention here only of the most important works in the fields that most closely resemble the topic of this research. An extensive literature review will follow in the second chapter of this study. In the subsequent literature review I will demonstrate that the existing literature in this field is not sufficient to answer the questions put forward in this research project.

On the one hand, we find a body of literature that deals with the correlation between conflict and hunger. However, the relationship between cause and effect in this literature is insufficient to explain the question at hand. For example, Macrae and Zwi, in their book *War & Hunger: Rethinking the International Responses to Complex Emergencies*, focus on the question in which ways warfare creates hunger. They offer some useful insights into the creation of hunger as a result of war. Furthermore, the authors mention the fact that when it comes to hunger there are both victims and beneficiaries (1994:10). Concerning the deliberate attempt to create hunger, Macrae and Zwi identify acts of omission, commission and provision (1994:10-20). However, their study is not an attempt to provide the theoretical *explanation* of these acts. The authors have not set as a goal to understand *why* combatants use these techniques but merely note that hunger is created amongst others due to the deliberate efforts by governments to subdue the civilian population by supplying or not supplying them with food. Macrae and Zwi's study is definitely useful as a

point of reference for this research project but does not provide a full-blown attempt at theorising this issue.

Another study that can be placed in this category is the volume of essays published by the French NGO Action against Hunger with the title *The Geopolitics of Hunger, 2000-2001: Hunger and Power*. The first part of this study provides a number of essays dealing with the topic of hunger as a weapon, out of which five concern African cases. However, all essays are written by different authors and predominantly descriptive in nature. No attempt at theorising is undertaken. Nevertheless, these case studies can serve as a valuable contribution to the case study research conducted in this thesis.

Besides these works, which come closest to the topic of this research, another body of literature can be found that concerns the politics of Food Aid and the question whether this aid is truly beneficial or in fact prolongs conflicts. Barrett and Maxwell (2006) provide a critical examination of the effectiveness of food aid in their book *Food Aid after Fifty Years: Recasting its role* (2005). In *Famine Crimes: Politics & The Disaster Relief Industry in Africa* (2002), Alex de Waal argues that the persistence of famine reflects political failings by African governments as well as western donors and NGOs. Famines are thus man-made. De Waal seeks to find out who is responsible for such famines and what the role of the Food Aid industry is in this respect. According to the author, such NGOs often do more harm than good. De Waal's focus is much more concerned with the international level, than the state and regional level I would like to analyse in my proposed research. The "disaster relief industry" as de Waal calls it, is only one part of the whole, and my study chooses to focus on the broader picture. Such a partial analysis is also provided in D. John Shaw's *The UN World Food Programme and the Development of Food Aid* (2001).

Now that I have demonstrated why the existing literature on the relationship between conflict and hunger is not sufficient to provide us with theoretical insights into the control of food supply lines by combatants in civil conflict, it is important to clarify why also the existing and more abundant literature on conflict and natural resources does not suffice. Essentially, I assume there is a fundamental difference between the purpose of the control over natural resources as opposed to the control over food supply lines. Where the first serves an external goal, the latter is of an internal nature.

The field of research that deals with resources and conflict is substantially larger than that of hunger and conflict (Ron, 2005; Collier and Hoeffler, 2002 and 2004; Duyvestein, 2000; Lujala, Petter and Gilmore, 2005; Fearon, 2005; Le Billon, 2004). In 2005 *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* dedicated a complete issue to the topic of resource wars, in which Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, who have led efforts to establish a correlation between resources and the incidence of civil conflict, were called upon to respond to the ever increasing critique on their findings (2005: 49 (4)).

Jeffrey Herbst can be considered as one of the leading scholars on the issue of resources and conflict. In his article "Economic Incentives, Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa" (2000), Herbst argues that resources play an important part in the funding of a rebellion, yet are not automatically its cause (2000: 276). This more or less goes against the claim made by Collier and Hoeffler that a correlation can be found between a country's propensity to experience civil war and its dependence on the export of primary commodities (Ron, 2005: 443; Collier and Hoeffler, 2002 and 2004). Notwithstanding the value of

Herbst's work for the field, his analysis focuses solely on exportable and lootable resources. These resources can include food, but only to the extent that it is suited for export in a profitable manner. Such crops include coffee, cocoa and cotton. Food production that is destined for the local population in a conflict zone can hardly be said to be profitable when exported. The profit margins of such commodities are too low to make export profitable, especially when the increased cost of transport through a conflict zone has to be taken into account. Furthermore, the protectionist policies of countries in the North, such as the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy, prevent the import of many crops produced in the South. Therefore, the control over food supply lines within and into the conflict zone is exercised by combatants in order to subdue the local population by the omission and commission of food and possibly win the "hearts and minds" by selective provision (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 11-19).

I do not argue here that an economic rationale behind the use of food as a tactical weapon does not exist at all. However, in this economic rationale food supply to the own troops is central. It does therefore not constitute the economic foundation under the war efforts. This is an essential difference that in my opinion makes the use of food, excluding export commodities, as a weapon substantially different from other resources such as minerals and it is thus not appropriate to employ existing frameworks that analyse natural resources to food.

### **1.3 Problem statement and research question**

The problem in this study is whether the control over food supply lines to non-combatants by combatants in civil conflict as a means of power displays a common pattern that holds in both cases under research.<sup>2</sup> Is the control over food a deliberate and rational choice by combatants or are situations of food scarcity and even hunger or famines simply a consequence of war. In other words, is hunger in the conflict situations studied 'man-made' or is it an unwanted outcome by all sides in the conflict.

To operationalise this problem for further research, my questions will be as follows: *What similarities exist in combatants' control over food supply lines to non-combatants in civil conflicts in Darfur and Somalia? Are the similarities sufficient to permit generalisations about this issue?*

### **1.4 Hypothesis**

My hypotheses are fairly simple and basically twofold. First, I expect to find that there is in fact a pattern in the way in which combatants use the control over food supply lines to non-combatants during civil conflict as a means of power. This pattern will be visible in both cases and will be strong enough to allow me to make general statements.

Second, I expect that the use of food supply lines might bear some resemblance to the way in which combatants use the control of other natural resources to aid their conflict operations. Yet, the tactic differs essentially in the purpose it serves. I expect this purpose to be first and foremost the control over the non-combatant population to either exercise control over it by the omission of food or to win support by (selective) provision and only thereafter to aid in the quest for revenue.

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<sup>2</sup> Explained in further detail under "Scope of study".

Following from these hypotheses, this study aims to investigate how combatants behave with respect to the food supply lines in their conflict area. Ultimately and if possible, I hope to find substantive evidence from the two cases studied in this thesis to come to some general statements as to the mechanisms behind the use of food supply lines for strategic purposes.

### **1.5 Scope of study**

Although many more cases could be found all over the world where the control over food supply lines to non-combatants has been or is being used as a means of power, analysing all these cases would go beyond the scope of this project. Therefore, I have chosen to limit my research to the African continent and have selected two cases on this continent that will be the topic of this research. These two cases are Darfur and Somalia. In order to have the greatest chance of finding a common pattern, it is essential that the two cases at hand are as homogeneous as possible (George and Bennett 2004: 67-72).

In this research the choice for these cases can be justified by the fact that in both, food has been used as a means of power and that both cases of violent civil conflict are still ongoing. Zimbabwe is another case where the supply of food to non-combatants has been used as a means of power, yet this case differs from the other cases in that there is no armed civil conflict ongoing in this country.

### **1.6 Research design**

Due to this study's focus on different cases of conflict that are still ongoing, this research will be comparative in nature. The work of George and Bennett (2004) and that of Eisenhardt (1989) dealing with case study research and theory building from this research, has been drawn upon in designing this research. The comparative nature of this research is reflected in the two cases that I have selected and that I will analyse according to a uniform set of questions. The answers to these questions for the specific cases will thereafter be compared and contrasted in order to draw conclusions from the data.

Although quantitative data will play a role in this study, the emphasis rests on the use of qualitative data. This method will therefore rely on a degree of interpretative social science (Neuman 2003: 139). Furthermore, the study will be of an inductive quality. Since no real theory exists in this field, and at this point in time it cannot be assumed that food as a means of power will react in the same way as other resources, such as minerals, theories such as those formulated by Herbst (2000) cannot be automatically applied to this issue.

### **1.7 Methodology**

The nature of this study will be both descriptive and explanatory. The descriptive part will be formed by the case studies. Here I will describe whether and how the warring parties in the two conflicts at hand try to control the food supply lines to non-combatants. The explanatory part will be formed mainly by the sections in each case study dealing with theoretical implications, as well as the concluding chapter. I will assemble the most important findings and will try to explain if, how and why food is intentionally used by

combatants as a means of power. Here I will test the hypothesis that there actually exists a general pattern with regard to the use of food as power.

I have mostly utilised secondary sources to test my hypotheses in the case studies. These sources include books, journal articles, papers, research reports and websites. Furthermore, I have conducted structured interviews with experts that work in this field and have experience with both conflict areas under research, such as those affiliated with the WFP.<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned above, in designing the case study research, I have made use of the works of both Eisenhardt (1989) and George and Bennett (2004). My methodology has been mainly based on George and Bennett's "Method of Structured, Focused Comparison" as found in their book *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (2004:67-72). According to this method, in order to overcome the previous flaws of case study research, the cases in a good comparative case study should be clearly identified in order to make sure that they are all instances of only one phenomenon. Second, these cases should not be chosen simply because they are interesting but rather because they can provide insight into a well-defined research objective, accompanied by a thorough research strategy. Finally, the cases should "employ variables of theoretical interest for purposes of explanation" (George and Bennett 2004: 69). What makes the above mentioned method of structured, focused comparison different from previous comparative research is George and Bennett's insistence on the use of a "set of standardized, general questions" which will be asked of each case (2004: 69-72). It is important that these questions are general, not overly specific, in order to apply to each case. This, however, does not mean to say that the researcher should not address more specific issues in every case (2004:86).

In line with this research design I have compiled a list of thirteen questions that I will ask of both cases and that will structure my research. These questions are the following:

1. What is the nature of the civil conflict?
2. To what extent are non-combatants made part of this conflict?
3. Who has the control over the food supply lines to non-combatants?
4. How was the food supply to non-combatants organised before the onset of the conflict?
5. Has this supply system changed as a result of the conflict and if yes, in what way?
6. To what extent is the non-combatant population dependent on Food Aid?
7. Has this dependence changed as a result of the ongoing conflict?
8. Is the deliverance of Food Aid obstructed by the combatants?
9. In which way are the combatants funding themselves?
10. Which sources do the combatants use to feed themselves?
11. What tactics do the combatants employ to exercise control over the local population?
12. To what extent does the control over food supply lines to non-combatants form part of this?
13. Do the combatants utilise the control over food supply lines to influence the behaviour of the civilian population to get the outcomes the combatants want?

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<sup>3</sup> To conduct these interviews, the interviewees will be supplied with an adapted version of the list of questions provided on the next page.

These questions are basically a reformulation of the main research question split up into its component parts. The first two questions identify the type and severity of the conflict. Question three to seven deal with the nature of food supply to non-combatants before and during the conflict. Question eight to twelve deal with the question whether combatants influence these food supply lines and if yes, to what purpose this is done. Finally, question thirteen deals essentially with power as defined by Joseph Nye (2004:2).<sup>4</sup> This question serves to assess whether the combatants can effectively use their control over food supply lines to non-combatants as a means of power. By asking these questions of each case, I will be able to collect the data necessary to answer the research questions formulated above. Nevertheless, they are general enough to allow case specific information to be included in the analysis, so as not to forge an artificial correlation based on too far stretching generalisations.

## **1.8 Limitations and delimitations**

This study will be delimited in its historical span in the sense that although an historical overview of the topic will be provided, the analysis focuses on current cases. Furthermore, it is geographically delimited in its focus on African examples.

The study also has a number of limitations, the most significant being the fact that there is no single theory that can be tested. In fact the study aims at creating the initial attempt at theorisation of this topic. It will therefore be less straightforward than other projects in accepting or discarding a hypothesis and it will be more difficult to identify which data have to be included and which have to be left out of the analysis. However, I feel this risk is worth undertaking in order to come to new insights into a topic that previously has seen little research.

Furthermore, the choice for only two case studies also forms a limitation. Ideally, this research project should be extended to a greater number of cases. However, the choice for a thorough and in-depth analysis of each case in the light of the length and scope of this project does not permit a greater number than two cases.

## **1.9 Conceptualisations**

### **1.9.1 Food supply**

The notion of food supply can be divided into four categories. Firstly, the local population could rely on their own food produce, secondly we find food purchased at local markets, thirdly, and sadly the case in many African countries, the local population can or will have to rely on food distributed by donors such as the WFP and finally the population can be fed by what is imported from other countries.

### **1.9.2 Means of power**

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<sup>4</sup> See “Conceptualisations”.

It is important here not to define power too narrowly. To use such a definition, which only focuses on traditional means of hard power, would defeat the purpose of this research. Therefore, I use Joseph Nye's definition of power as "the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants" (Nye 2004: 2). Nye argues that it is important to note that power does not only come about through coercion but also through co-optation. I would propose to define a means of power therefore as anything that will influence the behaviour of others so as to get the outcomes one wants. In line with this reasoning, the control over food can be a means of power.

### **1.9.3 Civil conflict**

With civil conflict I denote here any form of conflict that is being fought out *primarily* within the territorial borders of a single state *primarily* by actors from that state. It is important to note here the word *primarily*. Partially due to the fact that on the African continent territorial borders do not coincide with ethnic boundaries and that many states are hollowed out to such an extent that their sovereignty is being impaired and their borders become porous, civil conflict in Africa often sees a spill over effect of conflict from neighbouring states into conflict-ridden states. Furthermore, foreign combatants might also cross over into a state's territory simply in search of the spoils of war. This however, does not change the character of the conflict into an interstate conflict.

### **1.9.4 Non-combatants**

In my definition of non-combatants, I adhere to the description put forward in Protocol I to the four Geneva Conventions, which describes non-combatants as civilians not engaged in combat, as well as medical personnel, chaplains and soldiers who are *hors de combat*. Additionally, Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts, states that the civilian population and individual civilians "shall enjoy general protection against the dangers arising from military operations" (Part IV Art. 13 Sub 1). Furthermore, "[a]cts or threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population are prohibited." (Part IV Art. 13 Sub 2). Essential here is what is stated in Part IV Art 14:

"Starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited. It is therefore prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless, for that purpose, objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works."

### **1.9.5 Combatants**

When using the notion of combatants, I refer to both "unlawful" and "lawful" combatants. In an official statement made by the International Convention of the Red Cross (ICRC) in July 2005, combatants were described as "members of the armed forces of a State party to an international armed conflict and associated militia who fulfil the requisite criteria to directly engage in hostilities. They are generally considered lawful, or privileged, combatants who may not be prosecuted for the taking part in hostilities as long as they respect international humanitarian law. Upon capture they are entitled to prisoner of war status." Furthermore,

“[i]f civilians directly engage in hostilities, they are considered "unlawful" or "unprivileged" combatants or belligerents. They may be prosecuted under the domestic law of the detaining state for such action.”

(ICRC, 2005).

## **1.10 Structure of study**

The remainder of this study will have four chapters. The following section provides a short overview of what will be discussed in each chapter.

### **1.10.1 Chapter 2: Conceptualizing Conflict and Hunger: An overview of the literature**

This chapter will provide an overview of the literature based on the set of questions used in the case studies. I will provide a background to the use of food as a weapon in civil conflict, including an historical overview. This is followed by an analysis of the fragile nature of food supply to non-combatants in Africa, outlining the causes of food insecurity in Africa as well as the general impact of conflict on food insecurity. Thereafter, a structural approach is provided to the question of how food can be abused as a weapon as well as an inquiry into the logic behind the use of food as a weapon. The central question here is: which purposes does the artificial creation of famine serve and what ends do combatants achieve by strategically using food in combat? Some thought will also be given to the effectiveness of the ‘hunger weapon’ in Africa. Does it work and if yes, why is it effective? This chapter will finally explore the limitations of current thinking about food and conflict, followed by a concluding summary and an overview of how the lessons learned will be applied in the remainder of the research project.

### **1.10.2 Chapter 3: Civil conflict and food insecurity in Darfur**

An account of Sudan’s conflict history could go decennia back. However, in this research I would like to focus solely on the issue of Darfur since February 2003, when rebels from the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) attacked a government garrison. The government retaliated with aerial bombardments and support for the Arab Janjaweed militia, which began the ethnic cleansing of African tribes. Even the deployment of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) could not stop the militia and attacks on non-combatants continued.

From late 2006, attacks on aid workers and civilians increased exponentially, as rebel groups splintered and pursued ‘land-grab’ strategies. Attacks on food security in Darfur form an integral part of combat tactics on basically all sides of the conflict. Farms and villages are burned, livestock is looted and people are forcibly displaced, preventing them from cultivating their land or herding their livestock.

### **1.10.3 Chapter 4: Civil conflict and food insecurity in Somalia**

This Chapter will analyse the use of food as a weapon in the conflict in Somalia that has lasted for nearly two decades now. In 1991, the Somali leader Siad Barre fled the capital of Mogadishu, leaving anarchy and violence in his wake. My analysis in this Chapter draws on events from the last two decades, as the drivers of the conflict seem to have changed little over the last 18 years. Furthermore, a longer time span also allows me to trace changes in the use of food as a weapon as Somalia sank ever deeper into anarchy.

The political situation in Somalia is very different from Sudan, in that Sudan knows an effectively functioning government, while Somalia is as far removed from such a government as possible. Moreover, Somalia is one of the most ethnically homogeneous countries in Africa. Where in Darfur fighting has been taking place along an ethnic divide between Arabs and non-Arabs, in Somalia clan dynamics are a crucial driver in the conflict. Yet, these clan dynamics are rather superficial and Somalis are known to pragmatically change alliances between clans.

Currently, a severe humanitarian crisis has unfolded in the country, with nearly half the population in need of Food Aid and appalling levels of Acute Malnutrition, especially among children (International Crisis Group 2009a).

#### **1.10.4 Chapter 5: Conclusion**

This chapter will evaluate the hypotheses and answer the research question provided in above by using the data from the two case studies. I will assess whether there is enough evidence to support some general statements about the attacks on food security as a means of power in African civil conflict. Thereafter, I will highlight some important policy implications that flow from the research with regard to the negative side effects of Food Aid in such conflict situations and give some recommendation as to how such side effects could be mitigated. These two sections will be concluded by suggestions for further research.

# **Conceptualising Conflict and Hunger: An Overview of the Literature**

## **2.1 Introduction**

The methodological focus of this research project is on the use of case studies. As outlined in the previous Chapter, these cases will be subjected to a list of thirteen questions. However, a thorough understanding of the literature on the concepts of food insecurity, famine and conflict, their causes and their relations, is essential to interpreting the results that will be produced by the case studies. This Chapter will provide an overview of the literature based on the set of questions used in the case studies. Therefore, the structure of this review is modelled on the different focus points of the 13 questions. The first section links to the first two questions and will outline the use of food as a weapon in civil conflict. The second section provides background to questions three to seven and deals with the fragile nature of food supply to non-combatants in Africa. This section will pay attention to the causes of food insecurity in Africa as well as the general impact of conflict on food insecurity. I will also discuss the role and influence of Food Aid<sup>5</sup> in Africa in this section.

The third section is partially based on question eight of the set of questions but is slightly wider in scope. This section will provide a structural approach to how food can be abused as a weapon. It will also outline the different appearances of this weapon, such as sieges, laying of landmines and forced resettlement. This section will also analyse how Food Aid can be turned into a weapon. The fourth section serves as the theoretical framework to questions nine to 13 of the set of questions and deals with the logic behind the use of food as a weapon. The central question here is: which purposes does the artificial creation of famine serve and what ends do combatants achieve by strategically using food in combat? Some thought will also be given to the effectiveness of the ‘hunger weapon’ in Africa? Does it work and if yes, why is it so effective? Finally, section five will provide a conclusion to the literature review. Here I will summarise what lessons can be learned from this review and how they will be applied in the remainder of the research project.

## **2.2 Background to the use of food as a weapon in civil conflict**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

This section is loosely based on the first two questions of the set of questions, dealing with the nature of civil conflict and the extent to which non-combatants are made part of this conflict. However, the scope of this section is wider than just these two questions in order to provide some background to the topic of the use of food as a weapon in African civil conflict.

I will first pay attention to the reason behind the lack of literature dealing with the relationship between conflict and food insecurity. The issue of famine is on the list of many International Organizations that focus on Africa and is part of Millennium Development Goal No.1: “Eradicate extreme poverty and

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<sup>5</sup> In the interest of consistency I will use Food Aid with capitals, although both food aid and Food Aid are found in the literature.

hunger” (World Food Programme, 2009b). However, studies dealing with the relations between conflict and famine, and especially those dealing with the question whether famines are manmade, are few. This section will first try to find an explanation for this lack of literature. Thereafter a short historical overview will be provided to demonstrate that the use of food as a weapon in African civil conflict is by no means a new phenomenon. I will conclude with a brief summary of the arguments presented and how these will be used in the remainder of the study.

### **2.2.2 The lack of literature on food insecurity and conflict**

The body of literature that seeks to explain food insecurity and famine as a (partial) result of conflict instead of the periodic consequence of environmental factors is still relatively small. In particular, studies focusing on the deliberate role of conflict in creating food insecurity are hard to find. Nevertheless, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimated that conflict cost Africa over US\$ 120 billion worth of agricultural production during the last third of the twentieth century (Messer and Cohen, 2006: 3). According to Joanna Macrae and Anthony Zwi, famine is not simply a consequence of conflict but often represents its goal (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 301). Blaming conflict as the cause of food shortages complicates the work of amongst others NGOs focusing on Food Aid. When famine is the outcome of droughts for example, it is easier for such organizations to bring relief by handing out Food Aid. “The human rights dimension of famine has (...) been underplayed in favour of environmental factors, seen as politically neutral” (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 301). However, in a situation where food scarcity is the result of conflict, Food Aid might do little to bring any sustainable relief, or, in the worst case, might even prolong the conflict. As Alex de Waal has argued in most of his work (1994; 2002), Food Aid is less important in relieving famine than peace. “In situations of conflict, assistance is even more problematic since it is likely to have strategic military significance. (...) Food Aid has fed wars in Africa wherever it has gone” (De Waal and Omaar, 1994: 6). De Waal and Omaar go as far as to say that “[t]he presence of Western relief agencies can give spurious humanitarian credentials to military operations designed to displace and impoverish rural communities” (1994:6).

An interesting dynamic is thus at work here, which might explain the lack of research undertaken concerning the role of conflict in explaining food shortages, especially with regard to combatants deliberately using food as a weapon against the civilian population. A great deal of reports and publications written about this topic is either conducted or funded by NGOs, which use it to substantiate their own activities. Therefore, these NGOs have significant influence on setting the research agenda. The same goes for journalists, who are invited to write about these humanitarian crises. Richard Dowden (2009:7) describes this process as follows:

“The deal, mostly unspoken but well understood, is that aid workers tell journalists where disaster is breaking. The aid agencies provide plane tickets, a place to stay, vehicles, a driver, maybe a translator – and a story. In return the journalists give the aid agencies publicity, describing how they are saving Africans and using images of distress and helplessness to raise money”

However, especially since the much publicized hijacking of Food Aid supplies in recent years, most notably in the Gulf of Aden, it has become hard to ignore that Food Aid is not merely a benign relief effort operating in a vacuum, but has actually become a player in a political game, if not part of the conflict.

### 2.2.3 Historical overview

The use of food as a weapon in civil conflict is not a novelty, nor is it restricted to the African context or directly linked to situations of poverty. War can create famine in many different ways, including the destruction caused by battle and scorched-earth tactics, the requisitioning of food by armies, blockades of food and people in sieges, the imposition of restrictions on movement and trade, forcible relocation of the civilian population and enforced rationing of food. “Some counter-insurgency doctrines are tantamount to manuals for the creation of famine” (De Waal 2002: 117). Oftentimes a number of these methods are used simultaneously.

De Waal demonstrates that the use of food as a weapon in conflicts is not new to the African context. He notes how in the first generation of colonisation the colonial forces often expressly created famine. In a book published in 1896 titled *Small Wars – Their Principles and Practice*, Charles Caldwell wrote:

“[W]here there is no king to conquer, no capital to seize, no organized army to overthrow ... the objective is not so easy to select. It is then that the regular troops are forced to resort to cattle lifting and village burning and that the war assumes an aspect which may shock the humanitarian” (De Waal, 2002: 27).

When land was wanted for European farming, local peoples were seen as an obstruction and were forced off the land, often using tactics of destroying livestock and grain stocks. In the 1890s, in an attempt to grab as much land for white farming as possible, and also to force the Ndebele to surrender or face starvation, Cecil Rhodes’ British South Africa Company prevented the Ndebele from harvesting and deliberately destroyed their grain stocks (Meredith, 2007: 357-361; Illife, 1990: 23-24). In Tanganyika, the forced recruitment of porters for the First World War had a similar effect as the deliberate destroying of food stocks would have had, taking necessary farm labour away and in 1916-17, scorched-earth tactics by retreating Germans in Rwanda-Urundi created a famine (De Waal 1997: 27). Furthermore, after the Battle of Waterberg, on 11 August 1904, German soldiers under General Lothar Von Trotha in what was then German South West Africa, decided to follow the fleeing Herero into the forbidding Omaheke Desert, and pursue them till their death. In the four weeks that followed, some 65,000 Herero were killed or died of heat, thirst and exhaustion, totalling some eighty percent of the Herero population (Meredith 2005: 3). Another incident of a rather different nature can be found in the use of concentration camps by the British during the Boer War, in which not only many women and children died of malnutrition and starvation, but in which also many men were prevented from working the land (Meredith 2007: 453-61 and 484).

A more recent African example would be the great famine that struck Ethiopia from 1983 to 1985. De Waal (2002: 117). argues that this famine has been widely studied but poorly understood. Although drought, harvest failure and economic and agricultural policies of the government contributed to the famine, they were not the cause. The cause was the counter-insurgency campaign of the Ethiopian army

and air force in Tigray and North Wollo in 1980-85. The Ethiopian government set out to undermine the local economy not only through the destruction of harvests and livestock, but also by making it impossible to trade or migrate, by forcibly relocating the population, and by the manipulation of relief programs (Kaplan, 2003). In 1983, the government began a seventh offensive against western Tigray, which was a major grain surplus producing area. “In addition to outright destruction, the army requisitioned food and enforced blockades of food and people. Food was routinely used as a weapon of war” (Meredith 2005: 334). Although such a strategy would imply a war crime, the Acting Foreign Minister Tibebe Bekele was candid enough to tell the US Chargé d’Affairs that “food is a major element in our strategy against the secessionists” (De Waal 2002: 117).

To provide some background to the role conflict has had in creating famines, Table 1 provides an overview of selected twentieth-century African famines and their causal triggers as adapted from Mamadou Baro and Tara Deubel’s article “Persistent Hunger: Perspectives on Vulnerability, Famine, and Food Security in Sub-Sahara Africa”(2006).

**Table 1: Selected twentieth-century African famines.**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Causal Triggers</b>	<b>Estimated mortality</b>
<b>Nigeria (Hausaland)</b>	1902-1908	Drought	5000
<b>Tanzania (south)</b>	1906-1907	Conflict	37,500
<b>West Africa (Sahel)</b>	1913-1914	Drought	125,000
<b>Tanzania (central)</b>	1917-1919	Conflict and drought	30,000
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	1922	Drought	47
<b>Tanzania</b>	1929	Drought	500
<b>Rwanda</b>	1943-1944	Conflict and drought	300,000
<b>Malawi (Nyasaland)</b>	1949	Drought	200
<b>Ethiopia (Tigray)</b>	1957-1958	Drought and locusts	250,000
<b>Ethiopia (Wollo)</b>	1966	Drought	50,000
<b>Nigeria (Biafra)</b>	1968-1970	Conflict	1,000,000
<b>West Africa (Sahel)</b>	1969-1974	Drought	101,000
<b>Ethiopia (Tigray and Wollo)</b>	1972-1974	Drought	350,000
<b>Somalia</b>	1974-1975	Drought	20,000
<b>Uganda (Karamoja)</b>	1980-1981	Conflict and drought	30,000
<b>Mozambique</b>	1982-1985	Conflict and drought	100,000
<b>Ethiopia</b>	1983-1985	Conflict	800,000
<b>Sudan (Darfur, Kordofan)</b>	1984-1985	Conflict	250,000
<b>Sudan (south)</b>	1988	Conflict	250,000
<b>Somalia</b>	1991-1993	Conflict and drought	400,000
<b>Sudan (Bahr el Ghazal)</b>	1998	Conflict and drought	70,000

Source: Baro and Deubel, 2006: 523.

## **2.2.4 Conclusion and implications**

We can conclude from the previous section that the lack of literature on the relationship between conflict and food insecurity is by no means the consequence of the limited importance of the issue. The tactic of using food as a weapon in warfare is not new to the African context. What would then explain the absence of a large body of literature exploring the relationship between conflict and food insecurity? Possibly, many players in the field prefer politically neutral explanations for food insecurity and famine, such as environmental factors, instead of conflict. Yet, an increasing body of authors now agrees that Food Aid might do little to bring any sustainable relief in the absence of peace and might even prolong a conflict. Interestingly, according to the latest report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on global food security,

“countries that have scored successes [in reducing the number of undernourished people] include several that emerged from decades of civil war and conflict, offering striking evidence of the importance of peace and political stability for hunger reduction” (FAO, 2008: 15).

Such conclusions re-emphasize the importance of this research project and it is in this light that the findings of this study should be interpreted.

In the remainder of this study it is thus important to look under the surface and beyond the obvious explanations given by many NGOs, which might have a stake in keeping their operations in a conflict area going, even though it might be in the interest of a speedy termination of the conflict to cease their Food Aid projects.

## **2.3 The nature of food supply to non-combatants**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

Now that I have briefly introduced the topic, it is important to outline the nature of food supply to non-combatants in civil conflict. This section will provide a background to questions three to seven of the set of questions. These questions deal with the nature of the food supply to non-combatants prior to the conflict and the impact conflict has on this supply system. Essentially, these are questions pertaining to food (in)security in Africa. The first part of this section will summarise and analyse the debate in the literature about the origins of food insecurity. Here I will demonstrate how this debate has evolved from an emphasis on environmental factors affecting food security to a perspective that allows for political explanations. Thereafter, I will provide a short overview of the centrality of Food Aid in Africa when it comes to feeding the population of conflict zones. This section will round off with a concluding summary of the main arguments as well as some thoughts on how they will influence the remainder of the study.

### **2.3.2 The origins of food insecurity in Africa: a political perspective**

The origins of food insecurity in Africa have been the topic of a lively debate among scholars from a multitude of fields. Over the past decades, the focus of potential explanations has increasingly shifted from environmental factors as brought forward by agricultural scientists to manmade factors such as conflict and

explained from the field of International Relations. This section will provide a short overview of this debate, with an emphasis on the relationship between food security and conflict.

Early work on famine was heavily influenced by the ideas of Thomas Malthus in his *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), who argued that famine follows strong population growth and was nature's mechanism to keep populations in check. However, evidence suggests that Malthus's theory does not hold, since famines have not limited population growth to any noticeable extent. Furthermore, Malthus assumed technology to remain constant, whereas vast technological improvements in agriculture have taken place since the time of his writing (Baro and Deubel, 2006: 523).

In the 1970s and 1980s, solutions proposed to Africa's food security problems were mostly technological, placing an emphasis on production instead of equitable distribution and access to food. In *Surrender or Starve* (2003: 194), Robert Kaplan describes how in the 1980s the common opinion amongst academics in the United States was that "[m]oney and agricultural technology still could solve everything".

In line with this emphasis on improvements on the supply-side is the argument made by the Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto. His main thesis is that people in developing countries have only informal ownership of land and goods, without interaction with the formal legal and economic systems. In Africa, systems of communal land tenure are commonplace, where farmers are granted the right to use the land by tribal leadership. This makes it impossible for the poor to convert their informal ownerships into capital that De Soto claims would form the basis for entrepreneurship. This leaves no rational incentives to invest in and improve the land, resulting in low productivity. Hence, farmers in much of the developing world remain trapped in subsistence agriculture (De Soto, 1989 and 2000).

Furthermore, population pressures, unreliable weather conditions and climate change have all been named as scapegoats for chronic food insecurity in Africa, yet such factors alone do not explain the problem. Clover poses the following questions in this regard: "If the continent's resources far exceed its needs, how can it be that there is so much hunger? Why is it that countries that have millions of hungry people are exporting food to countries that are already well fed?" (Clover, 2003: 7).

Thus, food security is much more an issue of both limited *availability* of food in conjunction with imperfect *access* to food. One of the first proponents of this new, more political, school of thinking about famine and food insecurity was the Indian Nobel Prize Winner and scholar of developmental economics Amartya Sen. In his *Poverty and Famines* (1981) he argued that a famine is hardly ever the result of a lack of food, but more often caused by people are being denied access to food. Famines affect different households in different ways, depending on their ability to procure food. Baro and Deubel (2006: 524) give the example of the 1972-74 famine in Ethiopia, where there was no significant reduction in overall food output and food prices remained relatively stable, but people died of starvation nevertheless. The same holds for the Sahel famine of the mid-1970s where Mali, Mauritania and Niger all produced enough grain to feed their populations, if the food would have been properly distributed.

Sen notes that a famine has never occurred in a functioning liberal democracy.

"The diverse political freedoms that are available in a democratic state, including regular elections, free newspapers and freedom of speech, must be seen as the real force behind the elimination of famines. Here again, it appears that one set of freedoms – to criticize, publish

and vote- are usually linked up with other types of freedoms, such as the freedom to escape starvation and famine mortality” (De Waal, 2002: 2).

Sen first proposed this hypothesis in 1981, but it was not until the 1990s that it was taken up outside of India, and was propagated by for example Alexander de Waal and Human Rights Watch. One of the ways Sen proposed to rule out famine was the rather vague notion of a “political contract”, drawn up in human rights terminology, protecting the right to food and the right to be free of famine on a national level (De Waal, 2002: 3). Sen’s approach has come under attack in the 1990s for overly relying on economic market-based causation and neglecting the role of politics, history and social disruption (Baro and Deubel, 2006; De Waal, 2002). Yet, his main contribution to famine thinking, according to Baro and Deubel (2006:524), was his ability to shift the debate from “issues of availability to emphasizing the ability of individuals to obtain access to and control over food resources”.

Riding on Africa’s democracy wave since the early 1980s, Sen’s thesis was cause for great optimism, leading to an “end of history” like notion that famine could be history. Yet, as we now know, this optimism was premature. De Waal gives three main reasons why famines still prevail in Africa and why solving food insecurity in Africa is not as simple as Sen claims. First, the links between civil and political liberties and the protection from famine are more intricate than Sen indicates. Especially the notion of the political contract needs considerable review. Second and related to this political contract, it seems that the obstacles to creating such contracts in Africa are much more formidable than anticipated. De Waal argues that internal political decay is by far the most important factor in this regard. Deepening authoritarianism, the growth of so-called war economies, in which ruling elites strip a country of its resources with little long-term planning, and minimalist state strategies, which are characterized by the decay of service delivery are all political trends in Africa that undercut the potential for and value of such a political contract. Related to this argument of political decay is the poor management of vital infrastructure needed to ensure nationwide food security. Road and railway networks are often in poor condition, complicating speedy and adequate distribution of food to regions suffering shortages. The final obstacle mentioned by De Waal is the “rapid growth of the power of the ‘humanitarian international’- the cosmopolitan elite of relief workers, officials of donor agencies, consultant academics and the like, and the institutions for which they work” (De Waal, 2002: 3-4).

De Waal claims that the unexpected consequences of humanitarian action complicate the problem of famine and starvation. “[I]ts power is exercised and its resources dispensed at the cost of weakening the forms of political accountability that underlie the prevention of famine (De Waal, 2002: 4). De Waal argues that those affected by famines should reclaim their moral ownership. Such local political accountability is far more valuable than the “[g]eneralized, internationalized responsibility for fighting famine”, which the humanitarian community has to offer. “To be precise, the intractability of famine is the price that is paid for the ascendancy of humanitarianism” (De Waal, 2002: 5).

Reginald Green also points to a strong relationship between food security and conflict. He seeks to explain famine deaths in Africa by referring to medieval symbolism: “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse – Famine, Pestilence, War and Death – ride out together” (Green, 1994: 38). He argues that

without war, with the exception of Ethiopia, drought in Africa has seldom resulted in massive loss of life. Food production as well as relief food supplies are

“casualties of combat zones, mass dislocation, wrecked or blocked transport routes and bankrupted governments. Lack of food and of medical services, combined with the physical stress of flight, kill about twenty times as many human beings in Africa as do bombs, bullets and cold steel” (Green, 1994: 38).

This strong link between man-made causes such as conflict and political systems in general holds when analysing a number of African case studies about vulnerability to food insecurity. David Sogge describes the case of Angola in “Angola: Surviving against Rollback and Petrodollars” (1994). Sogge points to the disastrous effects of the arrival of the settler population from Portugal in the 1940s, which confiscated the lands of African cash croppers. Complementary to this large-scale confiscation, the settlers needed to mobilize cheap labour, resulting in a wageworker system, which decreased the ability of households to support themselves by farming. However, independence led to the collapse of commercial circuits. As a result, products could no longer get to the market, distribution systems collapsed, factory outputs fell and import streams dried up. Factories and plantations shut down, leaving the newly recruited wageworkers without an income. This destabilization was driven and aggravated by war. Sogge recounts how especially UNITA used food as a means of leverage, for example by planting mines on roads and rural pathways, as well as by extracting tribute in labour and food from local households (1994: 97).

Finally, an important contribution to the debate has been made by Keen (1991; 1994) and Rangasami (1985), who take a functional approach to famine. Both stress that in such a situation, there are not only losers but also those who profit economically, politically and militarily. Oftentimes, these interests are closely interlinked and dependent on each other for survival. Keen illustrates this point by quoting Michel Foucault, who argued in relation to the imprisonment of political victims in the former Soviet Union: “The problem of causes must not be dissociated from that of function: what use is the Gulag, what functions does it assure, in what strategies is it integrated?” (Keen, 1994: 111) Contrasting Sen’s economic approach to famine, Keen argues in his article on the famine among the Dinka of Sudan in the 1980s that it was not the victim’s endemic poverty, which exposed them to food insecurity but in many aspects precisely their assets, for example their land, livestock and newly discovered oil, which made them vulnerable. These assets combined with political under representation of the southern Sudanese groups, most notably the Dinka, exposed them to the exploitative processes by those seeking control over their assets, eventually resulting in famine (Keen, 1994: 121).

### **2.3.3 The role and influence of Food Aid**

A discussion of food insecurity in Africa would be incomplete without an assessment of the role and influence of Food Aid. Such aid deliveries form an essential part of Africa’s overall food security. In a 2008 report, the FAO stated that the overall number of undernourished people in Africa increased over the last decade from 169 million to 212 million. The continent did achieve some progress in relative terms, bringing the percentage of people suffering from chronic hunger down from 34 to 30 percent. The increase of the number of hungry people can be largely attributed to just one country, the Democratic Republic of

the Congo (DRC), where the number of undernourished shot up from 11 million to 43 million and from 29 to 76 percent of the population (FAO, 2008: 14-15). This large body of undernourished people is sometimes completely dependent on Food Aid to stay alive.

The United Nations' WFP is the largest Food Aid distributor on the African continent, often partnering with local NGOs. Table 2 shows the development in the number of Africans receiving Food Aid over the last decade. This Table demonstrates that the role of the WFP in Africa has been on the rise. For example in Somalia, more than 2,7 million people were officially beneficiaries of WFP Food Aid. This represents an increase of 1,2 million from 2007. In Sudan, this number is over six million, with an increase of half a million from 2007 (WFP, 2009a: 4). The population of Sudan is estimated at 41 million (CIA Factbook, 2009). This means that nearly 15 percent of the population is dependent on Food Aid from just the WFP. Furthermore, we have to take into account the fact that Food Aid deliveries are usually concentrated in specific areas, rather than the entire country. This makes the control over Food Aid in such areas an extremely valuable political, economic and military weapon.

<b>Table 2: Number of people in Africa receiving WFP Food Aid over the past decade</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total beneficiaries</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Total beneficiaries</b>
<b>1997</b>	20.5 million	<b>2003</b>	41.0 million
<b>1998</b>	20.6 million	<b>2004</b>	40.6 million
<b>1999</b>	22.0 million	<b>2005</b>	49.3 million
<b>2000</b>	34.9 million	<b>2006</b>	54.5 million
<b>2001</b>	24.1 million	<b>2007</b>	44.6 million
<b>2002</b>	34.3 million	<b>2008</b>	53.1 million

Source: World Food Programme, 2009a: 3.

**2.3.4 Conclusion and implications**

In summation, thinking about food security has undergone a transformation over the years. Environmental and technological factors have given way to explanations focusing on the role of politics and conflict. Although there are many different perspectives on the causes of famine and food insecurity in Africa, the literature survey provided here has been carefully composed out of studies with relevance to the topic of this study.

As Sen demonstrated, food security is much more an issue of both limited *availability* of food in conjunction with imperfect *access* to food. Famine has never occurred in a functioning liberal democracy. The argument that humanitarian action is partially responsible, as De Waal claims (2002: 4), for the problem of famine and starvation by making it intractable, is as interesting as it is radical. The view in this thesis is therefore that there is definitely some validity in De Waal's argument, but that blaming the humanitarian community as a whole, indiscriminate of the specific case at hand, is one step too far. Whether such complicity actually exists has to be established on a case-to-case basis. I will use the literature survey provided above as a background for establishing such complicity.

Furthermore, it is important to stress here the value of Green's work for this study. Green argues that without war, drought in Africa has seldom resulted in massive loss of life. This perspective will

resonate throughout this study, as I will try to establish how conflict often deliberately aggravates food insecurity. Rangasami and Keen's functional approach to famine, focusing on the balance between winners and losers in a famine, is also very valuable. This theory will be used in analysing the rationale behind the use of food as a weapon in the case study chapters.

Finally, the short overview of the centrality of Food Aid in Africa has shown us how vulnerable many societies are to the manipulation and obstruction of Food Aid deliveries. The large percentage of the population depending on Food Aid in the two case study chapters will call for a strong focus on the component of Food Aid within the aggregate of potential uses of food as a weapon.

## **2.4 The use of food as a weapon**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

In the previous section we learned about the origins of food insecurity in Africa and saw how vulnerable many African societies are to political changes affecting food production and procurement. This section will go a step further and will outline how combatants sometimes deliberately use food as a weapon in African civil conflict. This section partly ties in with question eight of the set of questions, pertaining to the obstruction of Food Aid deliveries by combatants, but is slightly broader in scope. I will aim to provide as broad an overview as possible of all the different ways in which food can be used as a weapon. This overview will be followed by an analysis of the intentional and unintentional effects of Food Aid on civil conflict. There are many ways in which combatants can abuse Food Aid to further their own causes. This section will identify the different modalities of this tactic, which will enable me to recognize them in the subsequent case study chapters. By means of conclusion, I will provide a theoretical model as drawn up from the analysis in this section and will demonstrate how this framework will be used in the case studies.

### **2.4.2 How conflict causes hunger**

Conflict can cause hunger in many different ways, yet, according to Messer, Cohen and D'Costa (2000), "[t]he most obvious way armed conflict affects hunger is through the deliberate use of hunger as a weapon." They list three groups of strategies in which combatants can starve civilians and opponents into submission. A first group of tactics can be labelled 'siege warfare' and include

"seizing or destroying food stocks, livestock, and other assets in food-producing regions; cutting off marketed supplies of food in these and other regions; and diverting food relief from intended beneficiaries to the military and their supporters" (Messer, Cohen and D'Costa, 2000).

A second strategy aims directly at the farming population by trying to reduce their numbers. This can take place through direct attacks and terror, enslavement, or forced recruitment as well as by malnutrition, illness, and eventually death. The decline of farming populations due to either their death, their forced removal from the area or their abandonment of farming out of fear, leads to a fall in production, which will in turn lead to food deficits in an ever-widening area. A third strategy consists of making farming impossible by laying landmines and poisoning wells. This strategy turns temporary acute food shortages into longer-term insufficiencies. Such actions force the farming community to abandon their property and

complicate their return, in effect interrupting food production and economic activities permanently. This last strategy ensures that conflict-related food shortages will lead to food emergencies in years to come, even after fighting has officially ceased (Messer, Cohen and D'Costa, 2000).

Macrae and Zwi have been pioneers in writing about the role of Food Aid in conflicts, as well as the broader topic of this thesis, the general use of food as a weapon. In their article entitled "Food as an Instrument of War in Contemporary African Famines" (1992), they made the first structured attempt at providing a framework for the role of food in low-intensity wars. According to Macrae and Zwi, "the deliberate targeting of food production, consumption and distribution has played an important part in creating and exacerbating (...) famines" (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 299).

Another distinction Macrae and Zwi have made in their research concerns the different forms such attacks on food can take. They distinguish between acts of omission, of commission and of provision. Acts of omission are essentially "failures to act" (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 11) and are instances where food supplies are misused or "where governments fail to monitor adequately and plan for food security in all sections of a country; it identifies the failure of governments to manage food reserves and to instigate and facilitate appropriate emergency measures" (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 301).

Within this category Macrae and Zwi distinguish between the lack of facilitation of relief operations and the mismanagement of existing food resources. With regard to the facilitation of relief operations, the United Nations passed two resolutions in 1988, urging governments to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to victims of disasters (UN Resolution 43/131 and UN Resolution 45/100), however, in practice, efforts to bring relief goods to conflict areas are often blocked by combatants. With regard to the management of existing food resources, governments have a responsibility towards their subjects to utilise national resources effectively. This means for example not selling off food stocks with the effect of making the population solely dependent on imports. A recent example of this is the case of Sudan where the country is "growing wheat for Saudi Arabia, sorghum for camels in the United Arab Emirates and vine-ripened tomatoes for the Jordanian Army", whereas at the same time, it is receiving shiploads of Food Aid and people in Darfur are dying of starvation (Gettleman, 2008).

Acts of commission refer to the production and procurement of food (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 303; Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 13-19). Acts under this heading relate to those actions that effectively undermine agricultural production and obstruct coping strategies. Within this category, Macrae and Zwi distinguish between attacks on production and procurement, which also include actions which undermine coping strategies, including attacks of Food Aid convoys, safe corridors and markets, and forced population relocation. Attacks on food production and consumption are central to the use of food as a weapon and hence the creation of conflict-famine. "The most important feature of these attacks is that they quicken the pace of destitution by blocking coping strategies, thus pushing communities further from the threshold of survival" (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 303). The heading of attacks on production as defined by Macrae and Zwi captures most of the tactics described above by Messer, Cohen and D'Costa. Under this heading Macrae and Zwi list scorched-earth tactics, the poisoning of wells, seizing or killing of livestock, the laying of landmines but also direct attacks on farmers (1994: 14-15). Yet, the disruption of other coping

mechanisms is also included, such as restrictions on movement or the ability to gather wild foods, as is the tactic of besiegement, especially that of garrison towns. Garrison towns often serve as centres for relief and military attacks on relief are commonplace.

With regard to the second aspect of acts of commission, the forced relocation of the population, Macrae and Zwi argue that displaced communities, particularly those in refugee camps, are at risk, both from the lack of access to their lands and thus means of subsistence as well as from the disease-ridden environment. Furthermore, forced resettlement is usually accompanied by high levels of violence, poor logistical and health planning, and restrictions on the population's ability to diversify in their food supply or employment opportunities (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 18).

Finally, the third category refers to acts of provision, where a differential supply of food is key. "Food may be selectively provided to government supporters, to those from whom support is sought, or to lure sections of the populations to areas controlled by the military" (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 19). Such acts often involve control over Food Aid and a distribution of such aid to those for whom it was not originally meant. It is difficult to find data on the selective provisioning of Food Aid, perhaps due to the NGOs' reluctance to disclose facts on the abuse of their aid programs. Macrae and Zwi give an example of such selective provisioning with regard to Food Aid given by USAID in Somalia in the late 1980s. This food was more often than not diverted to troops and loyal government bodies and only 12 percent of this aid reached the civilian population for which it was destined (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 19).

David Keen provides us with an excellent example of how four different exploitative processes can work together to create a famine, when he discusses the famine in South Western Sudan from 1991-1993 (Keen, 1994: 112). First, raiding, often in combination with scorched-earth army tactics, disrupted economic life and stripped communities of their cattle and grain stores, leaving them vulnerable to natural adversity. Thereafter, famine victims tried to sell assets, including labour and buy grain. This led the price of grain to shoot up and the price of assets to plummet, further exacerbating famines. The third force was the restriction of non-market strategies of survival. People were barred from collecting wild foods and moving to areas where, for example, relatives lived. The importance of this third tactic was also shown by De Waal's study of the famine in Darfur from 1984-1985 (1989). Finally, a variety of politically influential groups with a stake in prolonging the famine blocked the delivery of relief (Keen, 1994: 112).

### **2.4.3 The (un)intentional effects of Food Aid on civil conflict**

Duffield outlines the effects of the end of the Cold War as well as recessionary pressures of the early 1990s on the way receiving states handled emergency assistance. Due to the aforementioned two events, development aid to a number of regimes with an antagonistic relationship with the West decreased and emergency assistance became one of the few means of income left to these states. These regimes therefore had a stake in creating a sustainable state of emergency to ensure the inflow of aid. "The treasuries of several governments in the Horn of Africa have been major beneficiaries of international humanitarian operations" (Duffield, 1994: 60). Furthermore, the transport and guarding of emergency Food Aid in conflict situations is also in itself a vital source of livelihood, as well as vehicles, and arms. Jobs associated

with emergency Food Aid are relatively lucrative and can be given out to cronies in order to keep patronage networks alive (Messer, Cohen and D'Costa, 2000).

Yet, the control over Food Aid can serve a number of purposes other than purely economic, as outlined by Messer, Cohen and D'Costa (2000). They recount how in Ethiopia in the 1980s the Mengistu government first blocked Food Aid to starve out the opposition and thereafter employed it to remove and resettle opposition populations. In southern Sudan Food Aid was used as a source of power by both government and opposition forces, who employed it to control territories and populations and to keep their troops in fighting shape. In this case, food was also used a means for selective ethnic and religious oppression. Messer, Cohen and D'Costa argue how in both the Ethiopian and the Sudanese examples food shortages were first deliberately created and thereafter maintained by those able to control and divert Food Aid. As a final example, Messer, Cohen and D'Costa bring up the much-publicised case of the Hutu refugees in Goma (DRC) after the 1994 genocide of their Tutsi countrymen, who received large amounts of Food Aid, while the surviving Tutsi population in Rwanda at first received hardly any assistance. In these Hutu refugee camps, control of the food distribution process has been a vital source of political power. "Donated food intended for the most vulnerable women and children found its way first to powerful male interests, enabling them to keep invasionary hopes alive" (Messer, Cohen and D'Costa, 2000).

In her recent behind the scenes-study of the humanitarian aid industry in Africa, Polman (2009) provides a well-structured analysis of the mechanisms guiding the operations of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) in Africa, substantiated with numerous examples. As briefly mentioned above, Polman describes how INGOs in most conflicts negotiate access to war zones with the warring parties. The spoils of these negotiations are used to buy food and ammunition for their combatants, as well as to secure a support base amongst the population. Despite the consequences of such negotiations, in the absence of a binding framework guiding operations in the humanitarian field, every INGO or what Polman mockingly describes as MONGOs (referring to the many often celebrity founded "My Own NGOs"), can enter into such negotiations as they please. These negotiations are called "Shaking Hands with the Devil" in aid speak. Polman goes as far as to argue that INGOs are actually pushed into such negotiations from a Public Relations and competitive point of view. They have contracts to fulfil and budgets to spend (Polman, 2009: 98). Duffield furthermore recounts how it is fairly easy for a regime to find excuses for not allowing Food Aid into specific parts of their country. In Ethiopia and Sudan, denial of Food Aid to civilians in areas not under government control was accomplished by a variety of means

"ranging from a reluctance to acknowledge emergency conditions, assurances to donors that relief supplies were reaching all the needy, claiming insurmountable security and logistical problems to account for interminable delays, denying access for assessment purposes, through to plain obstruction" (Duffield, 1994: 62).

Furthermore, when stories about famines are being picked up by international media, people all around the world demand aid organizations to step up to the plate. It is much more difficult for such organizations to explain the intricate dynamics of the abuse of Food Aid, with the risk of either losing funds themselves or seeing other NGOs fill the vacuum, than to go in, help and turn a blind eye to the consequences.

An example to this point is the case of Biafra in the 1960s. The history of the conflict has been widely written about and will not be repeated here. This example demonstrates however how international Food Aid can prolong a civil conflict, which in the absence of such aid could have been terminated with only a fraction of the eventual casualties. The British journalist Frederick Forsyth witnessed the Public Relations campaign that was supposed to let as much humanitarian aid flow into the separatist province as possible. Although the media shocked the world with images of starving babies, the complexities of the problem, as well as the abuse of the aid system by the Biafran Government led by Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, were much more difficult to capture in a short camera moment broadcasted on the evening news. Forsyth argues: “People who couldn’t fathom the political complexities of the war could easily grasp the wrong in a picture of a child dying of starvation” (as quoted in De Waal, 2002: 74). It was evident immediately after the war that Food Aid had contributed considerably to the suffering of the starving Biafran people, who only saw a fraction of that aid, whereas much of the aid was diverted to Ojukwu in order to buy arms and feed his troops. Yet, De Waal notes that “[i]t has taken 25 years for the ethical implications to be faced more squarely” (2002: 77). Ian Smillie argues that

“[t]he airlift and the broader relief effort was (...) an act of unfortunate and profound folly. It prolonged the war by 18 months... A great deal of post-war effort went into refuting the charge that churches and NGOs prolonged the war. Because if it is true, they must also have prolonged the suffering, contributing to the deaths of 180,000 people or more”(De Waal, 2002: 77).

Frances Stewart outlines the danger of approaching Food Aid in conflict situations solely from a humanitarian perspective in his article “Food Aid during Conflict: Can One Reconcile its Humanitarian, Economic and Political Economy Effects?” (1998). He argues that Food Aid in conflict situations invariably has effects not only at the humanitarian but also at the economic and political economy level and that serious policy mistakes have occurred as a result of a narrow-minded pursuit of humanitarian objectives (Stewart, 1998: 560). Stewart argues that the short-term track record of conflict Food Aid is not that great, but that, even worse, “in the medium term, this form of delivery tends to undermine production, perpetuating the humanitarian emergency, while often contributing to the prolongation of conflict” (Stewart, 1998: 561). He argues that conflict Food Aid might actually sustain war gains for some groups. While the warring parties deliberately distort and weaken the country’s food production capacity, they use Food Aid to sustain their own food supplies. This makes the humanitarians providing Food Aid in a way accomplice to aiding the winning side and worsening the prospects of the losing side (Stewart, 1998: 564).

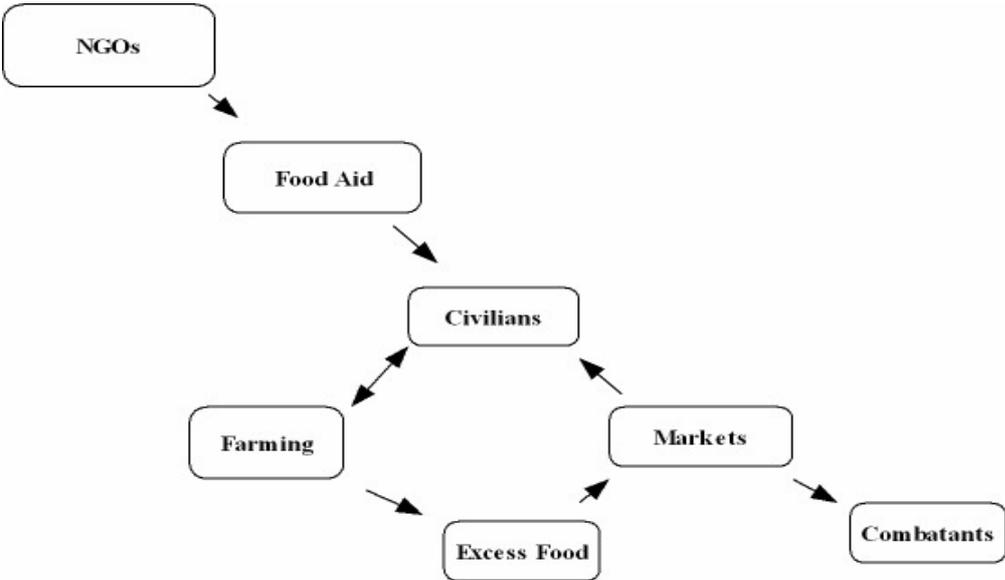
Duffield describes how a regime usually bases its decision to allow Food Aid into a country primarily on a need to feed one’s own troops. “In a sectarian asset-transfer economy the control of Food Aid is of vital strategic importance. In the Horn [of Africa], the diversion of Food Aid to feed troops and militia at the same time as denying relief to contested areas has been widespread” (Duffield, 1994: 61).

He recounts how in Ethiopia the peasant militia in the 1980s were not paid at all by the government and solely received access to Food Aid in exchange for their military services. He reports how donors regard a five percent leakage of Food Aid as acceptable. However, due to the amounts of food and money involved, in Ethiopia, five percent of Food Aid amounted to food for 300,000 to 400,000 people,

equivalent to the entire armed forces (Duffield, 1994: 61). Furthermore, lacking an international mandate, NGOs are dependent on the local regime for access in order to carry out their operations and are as a consequence often co-opted by one or the other side in a conflict. Although there are a few exceptions, such as Médecins Sans Frontières, who always aim to work on both sides of the conflict, most NGOs do not practice this principle of ‘active neutrality’. Estimates in the case of Ethiopia hold ninety percent of international relief assistance to be handed out in government-controlled areas. Similar figures are reported for Sudan in the 1990s (Duffield, 1994: 62).<sup>6</sup>

**2.4.4 Conclusion and implications: The theoretical model**

The previous two sections have outlined different ways of classifying the use of food as a weapon in civil conflict and have given us insight into the abuse of Food Aid in civil conflicts. By means of conclusion, this section will provide a visual summary of the different views. As a start, Figure 1 outlines the ideal distribution of food during armed conflict. In this situation, the civilians receive food from three main sources, namely distributed by NGOs in the form of Food Aid<sup>7</sup>, by (subsistence) farming and by food procured at the local markets. In this situation, combatants do not live off the civilian population and procure their food at the markets. The situation in Figure 1 is indeed an ideal type and will probably hardly ever occur in reality.



**Figure 1: The ideal situation**

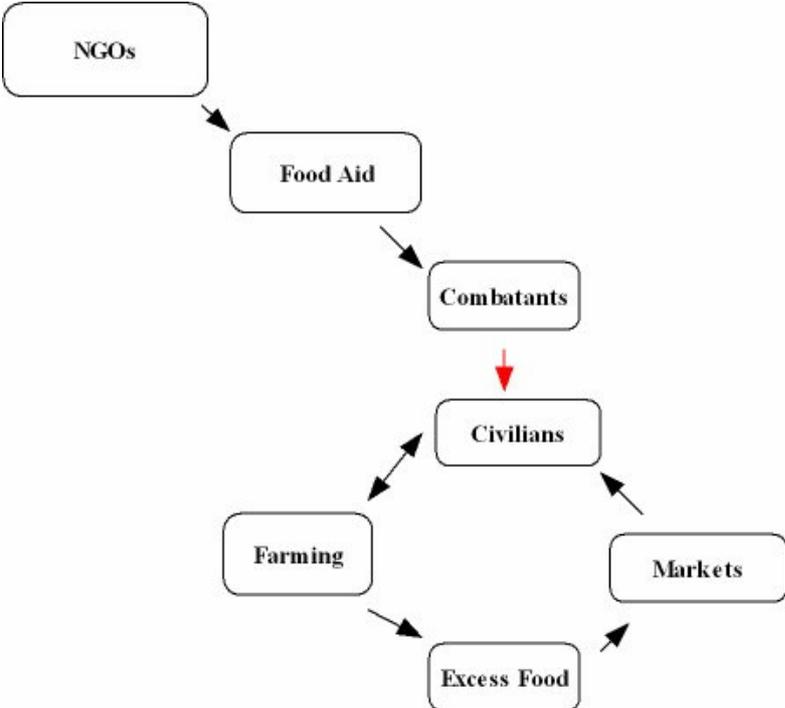
Figures 2, 3 and 4 are probably more accurate depictions of reality and visualise my hypotheses. First, I propose that there is in fact a pattern in the way in which combatants use the control over food supply lines to non-combatants during civil conflicts as a means of power. I expect that this pattern will take one of the forms proposed in Figures 2 to 4. My second hypothesis follows that food is first and

<sup>6</sup> The discussion above might raise the question whether Food Aid should be stopped. Please refer to the concluding Chapter for a discussion on this question.

<sup>7</sup> Although this might not sound like the ideal scenario, the distribution of Food Aid during armed conflict has become a reality and in this case, the ideal scenario refers to the ability of Food Aid NGOs to reach the civilian population without being hindered by the combatants.

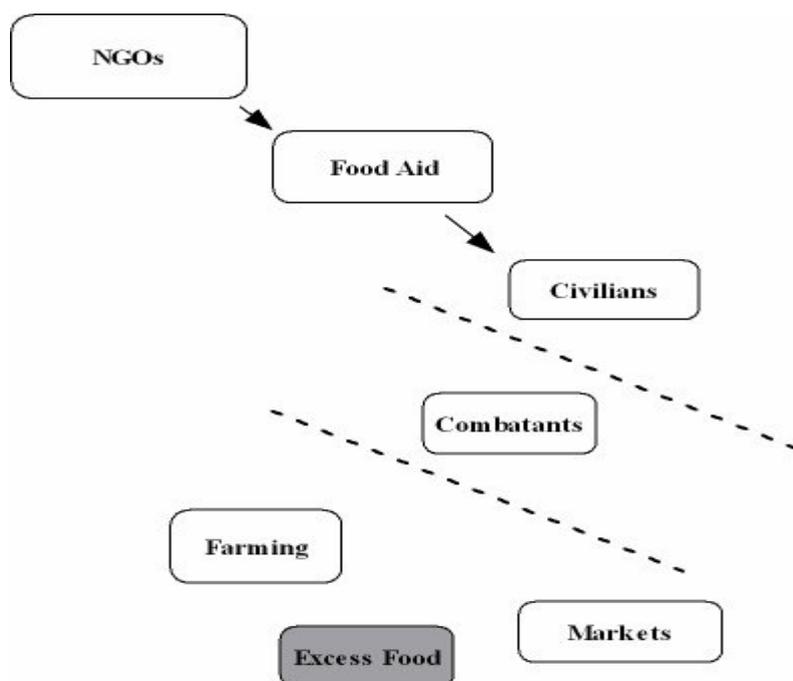
foremost used in civil conflict to control the non-combatant population by omission, commission or provision of food. Furthermore, as also extracted from the literature review in the following section “The Effectiveness of the Hunger Weapon”, this control over food can serve a military, economic and/or political purpose. Based on the review of the literature provided above concerning the different ways in which food can be used as a weapon, a number of potential scenarios exists, expressed in Figures 2 to 4.

Figure 2 shows how Food Aid can be abused to feed combatants as well as punish or reward civilians (shown in red). This relates to what Macrae and Zwi have labelled “selective provisioning” (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 19). Food Aid is first used to feed one’s own troops and the remainder is given to civilians, often by means of selective provisioning. Furthermore, Food Aid which is channeled through the combatants’s institutions is often ‘taxed’, serving an economic purpose. In this scenario, civilians are allowed to continue their production and procurement of food, through agriculture and markets. Combatants can choose to ignore the farming and market component of food production and procurement for a number of reasons, for example because they are not in effective control of the entire area, or for reasons of political support.



**Figure 2: The abuse of Food Aid**

The opposite scenario is also a possibility. In this scenario, either Food Aid does not exist, or it is left alone. As we have seen from the literature review provided above, in such instances, either markets or agricultural enterprises are attacked, for example by means of raids, forced resettlements or the laying of land mines (De Waal, 2002; Keen, 1994). This possibility is shown in Figure 3.



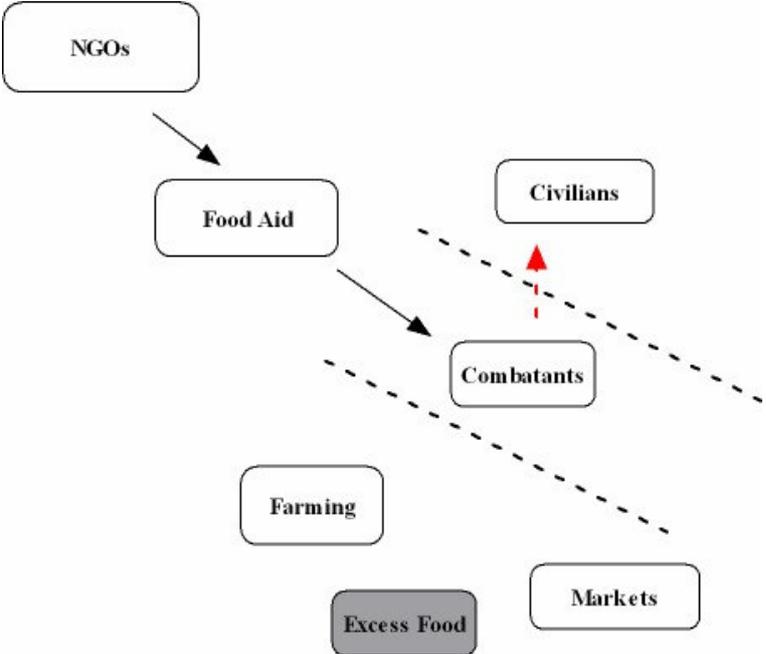
**Figure 3: Attacks on farming**

In this scenario Food Aid still reaches civilians but, due to deliberate and accidental effects of the conflict situation, civilians are unable to farm or trade. Figure 3 is a depiction of what Macrae and Zwi call “acts of commission” (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 303; Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 13-19). Sometimes combatants also force civilians to work the land. In this scenario combatants control the access to farming and markets (depicted by the dotted lines), and thus food production and procurement. Civilians are usually not completely cut off from their land, but the degree of access is determined by the combatants. Due to the distortion of food production and procurement, I expect that in such cases the excess of food that existed previously will cease to exist or become unaffordable (depicted in grey) and the relationships between farming, cash crop production (excess food) and markets will become irregular.

This scenario ties in with the first three processes Keen (1994:112) describes. First, farming and the functioning of markets are made impossible by raids and scorched-earth tactics. This strips civilians of their means of existence, leaving them vulnerable to natural adversity and at the whims of the combatants. Subsequently, the civilians who become the victims of famine will try to sell the assets they still have, including labour (potentially to the combatants), in order to buy food. This leads the price of food to go up and the price of assets, such as labour to drop, increasing civilian vulnerability. After this second process, combatants might try to restrict non-market strategies of survival. These strategies have usually been neglected in the past, as attacks on them require a greater degree of control over the area and its inhabitants. In this final process civilians are barred from collecting wild foods and moving to areas where, for example, relatives live.

Finally, both scenarios can come together in the pattern visualized in Figure 4. This pattern, with slight variations, is the pattern I expect to find in my case studies. In this scenario, combatants are in control of Food Aid and manage to severely distort agricultural practices in the way described in Figure 3. All access to food for civilians is in some way mediated by the combatants. The dotted lines from

combatants to civilians show the tactics used in the selective provisioning of such food. In this scenario both acts of commission and provision take place. Acts of omission can also occur but are less direct and usually require a longer stretch of time to take effect.



**Figure 4: The combination scenario**

I will use the theoretical model outlined in this section to analyse the two case studies in this thesis. It helps us to clarify the relationship between civilians and combatants with regard to the different sources of food production and procurement. In the case studies, I will try to visualize this relationship for the specific cases using similar figures to the ones presented above. I will also make use of the theoretical framework provided by Macrae and Zwi (1991; 1994) as well as Keen (1994).

**2.5 The effectiveness of the “hunger weapon”**

**2.5.1 Introduction**

The previous section has shown the different ways in which conflict and combatants themselves can cause food insecurity and even famines. An important question remains however. Why is using the “hunger weapon” a tactic of choice for combatants? What purposes does the artificial creation of famine serve and what ends do combatants achieve by strategically using food in combat? This section ties in with questions nine to thirteen of the set of questions, which deal with the different functions of the control over food supply lines and will provide a schematic outline of the different answers to these “Why?” questions. The conclusion of this section will summarise what has been learned in this section and will outline the implications of these findings on the remainder of the research.

**2.5.2 The logic behind the use of food as a weapon**

Now I have addressed the causes of food insecurity in Africa and the way conflict causes hunger, I will look at the logic behind the choice of food as a weapon in African civil conflict. As I noted in the

discussion presented above, the realisation that many famines are man-made and the result of deliberate wartime strategies has increasingly become part of current discourse on famine and food insecurity in Africa. Based on available literature, this section will argue that food insecurity and famine not only are often created as a result of conflict, but also serve a number of purposes for combatants. These purposes are compelling enough for them to actually *choose* the use of food as a weapon. In his 1994 book chapter “The Political Economy of Internal War: Asset Transfer, Complex Emergencies and International Aid”, Mark Duffield proposed the term complex political emergency, instead of the notion of famine. Duffield (1994:52) argues that complex emergencies

“such as famine in certain parts of Africa, have a distinct political economy structured by relations of power and gender (...) Within this framework, it is possible to regard famine as one possible outcome of a process of impoverishment resulting from the transfer of assets from the weak to the politically strong”.

Macrae agrees and argues that “war-related humanitarian crises are symptomatic of strategies of warfare which seek to inflict not simply a military defeat, but to disempower the opposition, to deny it an identity, and to undermine its ability to maintain political and economic integrity” (Macrae, 1998).

Keen stresses that the negative effects of conflict on food security are not simply a regrettable and unwanted consequence, but much rather a deliberate strategy (Keen, 1991: 150-151). De Waal concurs that behind the image of famine as “something simple, huge and apocalyptic” there exist a hidden agenda, which makes famine functional for certain political players (De Waal, 1989: 3).

Although expressly prohibited by international law, Polman argues that starvation as a tactic of war is used because it is fast, effective and cheap and sanctions connected with breaching the Geneva Conventions are non-existent. Furthermore, a potential famine will most probably attract Food Aid, which the combatants can exploit to fund their war efforts (Polman, 2009: 114).

According to Macrae and Zwi, attacks on food serve three primary functions in conflict situations (1992: 301). The first function is the political function. By undermining the ability of communities to produce and obtain food, combatants are able to render these people dependent either on themselves or on NGOs. This ensures that these people will become compliant, thinking it unwise to bite the hand that feeds them. An example of this can be found in the case of Uganda, where the government seemed to make little haste with solving the security problem in the North, where Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army terrorized civilians. Due to this lack of security the local Acholi population, a minority in Uganda, was often uprooted and spent a considerable amount of time in refugee camps. However, President Yoweri Museveni used this to his advantage, since it prevented the Northerners from aiding the Lord’s Resistance Army and made them dependent on government handouts (Green, 2008).

Frances Stewart argues that food is very often used as a weapon in war. The ability to secure food is an essential task to sustain one’s own group and thus to guarantee the loyalty of supporters. Conversely, preventing enemy groups from securing food will enable their defeat (Stewart, 1998: 563). Polman provides another perspective on the political argument provided here. She recounts how the WFP offered local warlords in Northeastern Somalia to distribute Food Aid in that region in 1992. Although that part of the country was not hungry, there existed a considerable amount of social unrest. Local leaders were

confronted with the following dilemma: Since the local population did not need the food, they would probably sell it to acquire weapons. Yet, refusing the Food Aid was not an option, since rival clans, who were not hungry either, did accept the Food Aid and were arming themselves with the spoils. This way an arms race emerged and no clan or warlord could afford to refuse the aid (Polman, 2009: 122).

The second function Macrae and Zwi identify is economic. During conflicts, there are always those who benefit, and these people often have ties to those in power, both politically and militarily. By keeping food supplies limited, these merchants can make significant profits out of this situation of scarcity. This argument resonates with Amrita Rangasami's view of famine. Rangasami argues that "the famine process cannot be defined with reference to the victims of starvation alone. It is a process in which benefits accrue to one section of the community while losses flow to the other" (Rangasami, 1985: 1748). Stewart concurs that during conflict, some groups become economic "winners". They manage to sustain and often improve their livelihoods, since the conflict creates economic opportunities, such as theft, black market activities and profit from shortages (1998; 563-64). Keen (1994: 111) describes how in the case of Sudan between 1983 and 1988, famine promised and to some extent delivered both economic and military benefits and was also linked to sexual exploitation and religious indoctrination.

Finally, the third function of attacks on food, the military function, is the most logical. Combatants need food supplies to feed themselves and depend on the civilian population to provide them with this. As a WFP spokesperson told Polman: "In every war, soldiers are the last to die of hunger. It's frustrating, very frustrating" (Polman, 2009: 129). This effectively pulls the civilian population into the conflict, blurring the lines between civilians and combatants. Opposing forces can therefore see civilians as a legitimate target for attacks, resulting in numerous civilian casualties in African civil conflicts, and many others being forced from their settlements (Macrae and Zwi 1992: 301). Furthermore, from a military standpoint, combatants in African civil conflicts usually also feel entitled to a share in the international Food Aid that flows into the country. Polman recounts how in negotiations with INGOs in Liberia, former President Charles Taylor demanded 15 percent of the value of the aid goods, to be paid to him personally in cash, since his troops had to eat as well. In Somalia, the levies on Food Aid demanded by Somali warlords rose to as much as 80 percent (Polman, 2009: 97).

Polman argues that combatants know the advantages of the use of food as a weapon in African civil conflicts. During extensive fieldwork in Sierra Leone, she recorded how the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels had eaten all the food in the surroundings of their headquarters in Makeni, until only canned food remained. First they slaughtered all the cattle, then they ate the harvest and eventually the seeds that should have created the harvests for the next year. When she asked the rebels why they had done so, she was provided with the following answer: "W.A.R. means *Waste All Resources*, so that you [the white Western aid community] will come and make it better" (Polman, 2009: 161 and 165).

<b>Table 3: The Different Functions of Attacks on Food and Food Aid</b>		
<b>Political</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Military</b>
<b>Will make population dependent on those who control the food supply.</b>	Merchants can make significant profits out of situations of scarcity. These groups will then again render political support.	Combatants need food supplies to feed themselves.
<b>Preventing opposing forces to access food will render their defeat.</b>	Diverted or confiscated Food Aid can be sold in order to buy arms.	A diversion of a few percent of Food Aid is often enough to feed an entire militia.
<b>Diverted Food Aid can be used to reward supporters.</b>	Profits from the sale of food or Food Aid can be used to pay combatants.	
<b>Access to food and Food Aid can prove instrumental in securing local support and survival of the group.</b>	Combatants can tax Food Aid.	

However, three quarters of international Food Aid is being distributed by private NGOs, who have no binding ethical code of conduct and who are not even required to know what the conflict, in which they are handing out food, is all about. When local rulers allowed NGOs to distribute Food Aid in a specific area, this was because the population had to be lured into staying in the area. On the other hand, in areas where Food Aid was barred, the population was supposed to relocate (Polman, 2009: 120). This point is confirmed in Macrae and Zwi's work when they argue that

“[f]ood has been used to lure civilian populations into areas controlled by government or rebel forces (...) Similarly, by blocking relief aid into rural, rebel-held areas and centring relief efforts in garrison towns, famine affected populations may be forced to move into government-held areas” (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 308).

### **2.5.3 Conclusion**

This section has shown us that using the control over food as a tactic in conflict can have political, economic and military functions. Table 3 provides a schematisation of the main functions grouped in to these three categories. In the case studies, I will be analysing control over food supply according to the classification provided in Table 3. This means I will look at the political, economic and military implications of using the “hunger weapon”.

In my opinion, it is crucial to keep in mind that in each conflict there are both winners and losers. Conflict in the African context most definitely serves a purpose to the few in power who are, in the words of the esteemed Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe in his novel *A Man of the People*, “the smart, and the lucky and hardly ever the best” (Achebe, 1988: 37). Those in power often have a stake in creating an enduring conflict and perpetuating conditions of famine might prove instrumental in realizing this. The economic value of Food Aid alone amounts to millions, not taking into account the political and military significance of such control. In countries like Somalia, where there is little to fight over, control over Food Aid might become the sole purpose of hostilities.

Finally, another factor leads me to believe that food will increasingly become valuable to combatants as a tactic of war. There is currently no definite answer to the question whether the effects of

climate change cause an increase in conflict (Barnett, 2003: 11). However, climate change makes agricultural practices in many parts of Africa more volatile, due to harsher and more unpredictable weather conditions as well as an increase in desertification. Africa, where according to the IMF 95 percent of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood, is the continent that is most vulnerable to climate change. “In the coming years, many African countries are likely to experience more severe droughts and declines in water supply, which would further aggravate food shortages on the continent” (Kato, 2008). Furthermore, due to an increased likeliness of natural disasters, populations may seek to migrate, raising the risk of social conflicts. According to estimates made by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), by 2080, almost a billion people in Asia and Africa could experience shortages of water, and many could face increased hunger. “In some of the poorest countries, the damage—when measured as a reduction in agricultural productivity—could reach devastating levels of greater than 50 percent” (Kato, 2008). This line of reasoning leads me to believe that food may become increasingly scarce in the future in Africa and the control over the supply of food more valuable. Where weather conditions have become unpredictable, famines might occur more frequently and poor subsistence farmers may become more dependent on other sources of nutrition like Food Aid. Most probably, for combatants, the control over food production in general and Food Aid in particular will become an ever more valuable weapon.

#### **2.5.4 Conclusion and implications**

The aim of this Chapter was to provide background to the topic of the use of food as a weapon and to provide the necessary tools to place the case studies into context. Furthermore, I have drawn a partial theoretical framework from the literature, which I will be evaluating in the remainder of this study.

The first section, linked to questions one and two of the set of questions, has shown us that it is essential to be careful when interpreting reports and even newspaper articles about conflict situations where food is used as a weapon, especially when they concern the abuse of Food Aid. In the remainder of the study, I will therefore remain vigilant about creating a biased analysis.

The second section aimed to raise awareness of the importance of political factors in creating and aggravating food insecurity and links back to questions three to seven. Not just the availability of food, but more the access to food is crucial in creating famines. Food Aid can create a greater availability of food, but if access remains limited, little change is effectuated. Furthermore, famines are essentially a game of winners and losers and it is therefore crucial in the case studies to answer the question of “Qui Bono?” The short overview of the centrality of Food Aid has shown us how vulnerable many societies are to the manipulation and obstruction of Food Aid deliveries. The large percentage of the population depending on Food Aid in the two case study chapters will call for a strong focus on the component of Food Aid within the aggregate of potential uses of food as a weapon.

The third section, building on question eight, has provided us with a theoretical model based on the work of Macrae and Zwi (1991; 1994) and Keen (1994). This model has been depicted in Figures 1 to 4. In the case study chapters, I will be evaluating the adequacy of this model. I expect to find that the situation in

the case studies will most resemble Figure 4, in which the combatants both obstruct the traditional means of food production and procurement as well as the delivery of Food Aid.

The fourth section, linking back to questions nine to thirteen, outlined the different functions of the control over food as a tactic in conflict. These functions can be classified as political, economic and military. Table 3 provides a schematisation of the main functions grouped into these three categories. This classification will be used in the case studies, where I will be analysing control over food supply according to Table 3. In the two case studies, I expect to find that the control over food serves all three functions to different degrees. Those in power often have a stake in a perpetuation of conflict and creating famine might prove instrumental in realising this. This awareness is necessary to our understanding of the two case studies to follow.

# **Civil conflict and food insecurity in Darfur**

## **3.1 Introduction**

This section builds on the literature and theory provided in Chapter Two and applies the theory from this Chapter to the case of Darfur. The aim of this case study is to evaluate the hypotheses outlined in Chapter One in order to better understand the use of food as a weapon. The material used to research and write this case study is derived from reports about the situation on the ground, newspaper articles and interviews.<sup>8</sup> Although I aim to draw as much as possible on current information, it is not my intention to provide a chronological report of the humanitarian crisis that has been evolving in Darfur since 2003. Rather, I have analysed and presented facts in such a way to facilitate the evaluation of my hypotheses and bring insight into the topic at hand. In a rapidly changing conflict environment like Darfur, the challenges faced by NGOs as well as civilians in a given year are not necessarily the same in the next year. The nature of the use of food as a weapon at a given moment in time might be rather different a few months later. However, I feel this changing environment does not make the evaluation of my hypotheses impossible. It is my aim to provide insight in the “How and Why?” questions of attacks on food security, not to provide a chronological overview of the evolution of the use of this weapon.

As a format for these case study chapters, I have slightly deviated from the traditional format of overall description and analysis. Instead, the case study chapters will follow the format of the set of questions and the corresponding section as outlined in Chapter Two. This results in four separate sections for the case study chapters. The first section will provide a background to the conflict. The subsequent three sections are more analytical. Within each of these three sections, I will first provide description followed by a theoretical analysis, resulting in three subsections of theory, rather than one theoretical section. This structure, I feel, results in a more comprehensive evaluation of the different theoretical segments identified in Chapter Two and the case study chapters will gain significantly in clarity. The first section provides background to the nature of the conflict in Darfur, tying in with questions one and two of the set of questions. The second section deals with the nature of food supply to non-combatants and the question of how this supply changed due to the conflict. This links back to questions three to seven. The third section will build on this by providing an analysis of the use of food as a weapon in Darfur, essentially answering the “How” question. The fourth section, linking back to questions nine to 13, deals with the “Why” question. Why is control over food used as a weapon in Darfur and why is it so effective? Finally, the conclusion will summarise the main findings from this case study.

## **3.2 Background to the conflict in Darfur**

The crisis in Darfur is the result of a conflict between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and rebel opposition movements in Darfur, most notably the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The conflict in Darfur broke out in early 2003, after the SLA and the JEM

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<sup>8</sup> For a list of the interviews please see Appendix I.

began attacking government targets in the region.<sup>9</sup> These rebels accused the GoS of favouring nomadic Arab pastoralists over black African agriculturalists and demanded inclusion in the new power sharing arrangements between the North and the South Sudan.

The conflict is thus being played out along ethnic lines, with Arab Janjaweed militia supporting the GoS and ethnic groups like the Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit siding with the rebels. Darfur, which actually means land of the Fur, has a history of conflict and tension over land and grazing rights between Arab and non-Arab groups (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 32; BBC News, 2009b; Flint and De Waal, 2008).

There were a number of causes underlying the outbreak of violence in 2003. First, as mentioned, Darfur has a history of ethnic conflict of Fur, Zaghawa and Massalit versus Arab groups. Moreover, over the past decades, the three states that make up Darfur have been systematically marginalised by the GoS. At a national level, the GoS has pursued a strategy of arabisation, the so-called Arab gathering, which is perceived as a threat by the black African people of Darfur. On the other hand, the Arab communities within Darfur feel marginalised by the majority black African groups. Finally, within Darfur, due to the increase in drought years, competition over natural resources has become fiercer (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 32). Effectively, the conflict has economic, political, and ethnic dimensions. Its economic roots lie in the competition between Arab pastoralists and African agriculturalists over resources, such as land and water. Political marginalisation has also contributed to the conflict. Finally, it has acquired an ethnic component in which civilians deliberately have been targeted based on their ethnicity.

The rebellion in Darfur alarmed the Sudanese authorities, since it posed a threat to the viability of the country as a whole. The GoS feared that similarly neglected regions in the east would demand large degrees of autonomy, if not the right to independence. Thus, the government's response was to mount a campaign of aerial bombardment supporting ground attacks by an Arab militia, the Janjaweed, recruited from local groups and armed by the government. The Janjaweed mounted a campaign of killing, rape, looting and burning villages, abduction of children, poisoning of water supplies, and destroying food sources. However, up till the moment of writing, the GoS denies any links to the Janjaweed, who are accused of attempts to cleanse black Africans from the territory. President Omar al-Bashir has even called the Janjaweed "thieves and gangsters" (Tanner, 2005; BBC News, 2009b).

Since the onset of the conflict in 2003, the crisis has affected more than 4.7 million people, including nearly 2.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Most of these IDPs now live in camps. Darfuris say the Janjaweed patrol outside the camps, men are killed, and women raped if they venture too far in search of firewood or water (BBC News, 2009b; USAID, 2009).

According to International Crisis Group, in a March 2009 update, the Darfur conflict has changed radically in the past year and a half. Although there are fewer deaths than in the 2003-2004 period, the conflict has mutated as the parties have splintered and the number of confrontations have multiplied. In 2008, violence again increased, and access for humanitarian agencies became more difficult. Furthermore, attacks by both the government and the rebel forces continue, including large-scale aerial attacks in West

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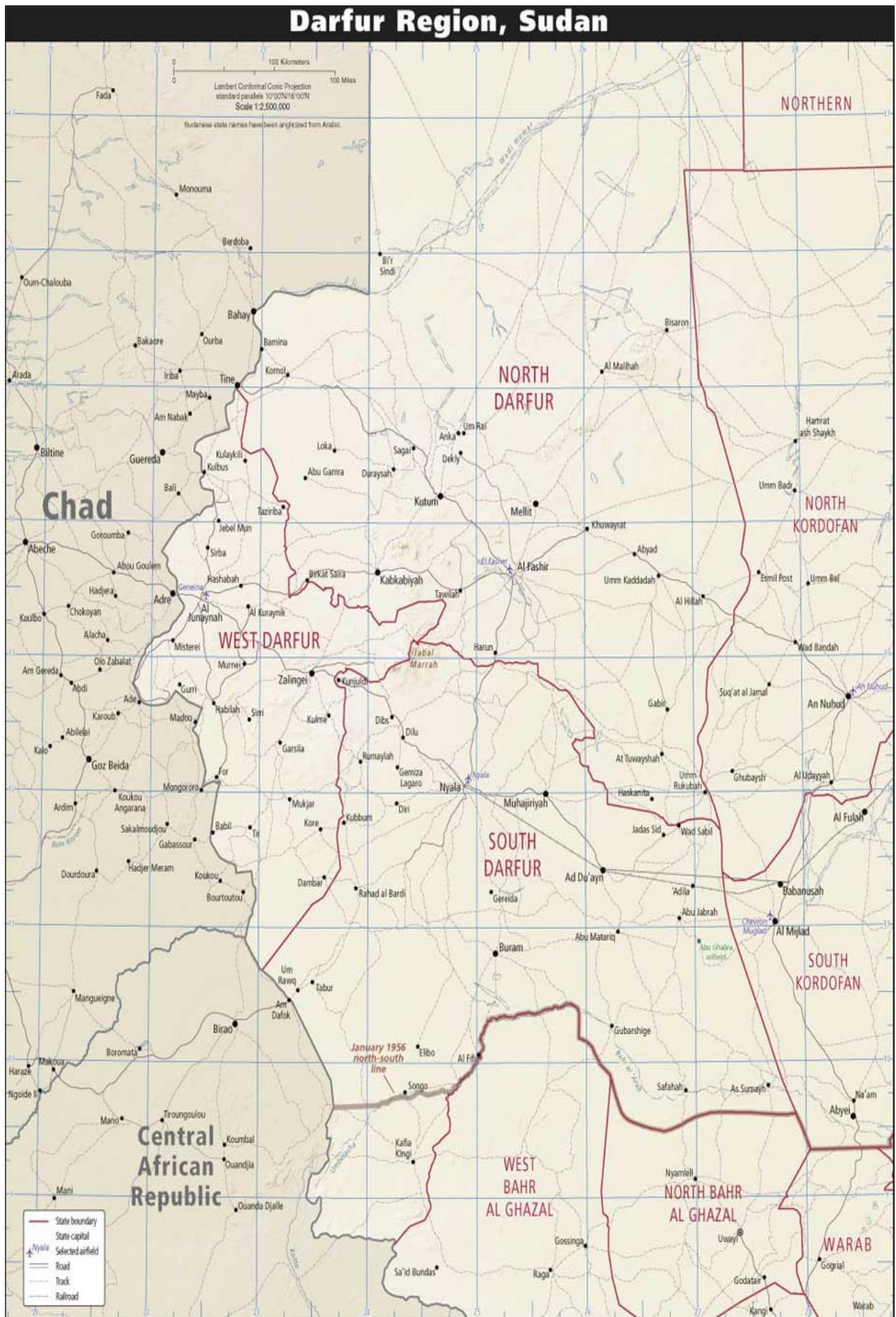
<sup>9</sup> The region that comprises Darfur consists of three states: North Darfur (Shamal Darfor), with its capital Al-Fashir, West Darfur (Gharb Darfor) with its capital Geneina (or Al-Junaynah) and South Darfur (Janob Darfor), of which Nyala is the capital (BBC News, 2009b; Flint and De Waal, 2008). Please see the map at the end of this section.

Darfur in February 2008. An attack by government troops on an IDP camp in Kalma, in South Darfur in August 2008 killed more than 30 IDPs and drew widespread international condemnation (International Crisis Group, 2009). On the other hand, rebel signatories of the May 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), have been responsible for attacks on civilians, humanitarians, the AU mission in Sudan (AMIS) and some of the violence in the IDP camps. These rebels have essentially benefited from the conflict as their leaders have been given government jobs and land. However, they lack a clearly defined role in the new peace negotiations, have little to gain from them, and are thus potential spoilers (International Crisis Group, 2009).

A recent USAID report estimates that between January and mid-May 2009, violence again displaced approximately 137,000 individuals in Darfur. Concurrently, due to increased insecurity, targeted attacks against aid workers and bureaucratic obstacles, humanitarian agencies have experienced reduced access to affected populations since 2006. Moreover, as a result of worsening relations between the GoS and the West, President al-Bashir announced the expulsion of 13 international organizations and closure of three national humanitarian agencies in March 2009. The remaining humanitarian organizations on the other hand are facing deteriorating access to those in need (USAID, 2009).

The May 2006 DPA was essentially a failure, lacking important signatories and scope. Some core issues that drive the conflict, among them land tenure and use, including grazing rights, and the role and reform of local government and administrative structures, were not addressed and will need to be on the agenda of any new negotiations if any significant agreement is to be reached.

The humanitarian consequences of the conflict in Darfur have been dire. By October 2008, there were an estimated 2,7 million IDPs, with an additional two million residents considered affected by conflict. The humanitarian crisis was at its worst in 2003-2004, with an acute malnutrition rate of 21.8 percent and an estimated 160,000 excess deaths between September 2003 and June 2005. Between 2004 and 2005, malnutrition as well as the mortality rate declined considerably. Yet, from 2006, food security and nutrition rates deteriorated again. Currently, food security is thought to have improved, yet this improvement is mainly caused by good weather conditions, and insecurity and restrictions on movements continue to be significant constraints. The population of Darfur is faced with too few livelihood options to construct a sustainable living and many groups are resorting to the collection and sale of natural resources, which in turn fuels the conflict (Pantuliano et al, 2009: 2).



Map 1: Darfur (University of Texas Libraries, 2009).

### **3.3 The nature of food supply to non-combatants in Darfur**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

In Chapter Two, I demonstrated that food insecurity is an issue of both limited *availability* of food in conjunction with imperfect *access* to food. Furthermore, as Reginald Green argued, without war, drought in Africa has seldom resulted in massive loss of life (1994: 38). I also outlined in the previous Chapter how vulnerable many African societies are to the manipulation and obstruction of Food Aid deliveries. All of these previous arguments hold true in this case study. This section will focus on the nature of food supply to and livelihoods of non-combatants, corresponding to questions three to seven of the set of questions. In this section, I will first pay attention to the livelihoods of Darfuris before the conflict, followed by an analysis of the impact of the conflict on these livelihoods. The third section will answer questions six and seven, namely, to what extent the non-combatant population depends on Food Aid and whether this dependency has changed as a result of the ongoing conflict. These three sections will be followed by a theoretical analysis, in which I will contextualize the findings from this case study using the body of literature and theory as explained in Chapter Two.

#### **3.3.2 Livelihoods in Darfur before the conflict**

Due to its geographical location and the impact of climate change, Darfur is particularly vulnerable to variable and extreme weather conditions affecting food production. Bromwich and Adam provide an analysis of the environmental impact of the conflict in Darfur. They argue that rainfall in Darfur has decreased over the period for which records exist. Due to the effects of climate change, the vulnerability of livelihoods of the Darfuris has increased. “Increasing variability is causing a rise in the percentage of failed harvests” (Bromwich and Adam, 2007: 18). Furthermore, the prevailing geology is highly unfavourable towards the storage of groundwater, further increasing vulnerability to droughts. The increase in population density since the mid 1970s, in turn, puts pressure on both sedentary and pastoralist livelihood systems. This increased population density has caused overgrazing and intensification of cropping, resulting in lower yields and carrying capacities. “Whilst the environmental pressure on livelihoods is acting over the long term, it can be climatic extremes that trigger major shifts in livelihood strategies and this is frequently accompanied by conflict” (Bromwich and Adam, 2007: 21).

Despite these unfavourable climatic conditions however, in the absence of conflict and very bad droughts, the region was normally able to achieve food self-sufficiency and the more prosperous parts of the region even produced a surplus. Prior to the conflict in Darfur, livelihoods were based on a combination of farming, herding, trade and labour migration. The surplus-producing parts turned into a source of employment and grain for the less affluent and prosperous parts of the region. Generally, the northeast of Darfur is most food insecure (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 7).

Another important means of food supply to non-combatants consists of food purchased at the local markets. A May 2008 report prepared by Tufts University’s Feinstein International Centre on the impact of the conflict on trade and markets in Darfur lists the devastating effects of the conflict on Darfur’s

previously thriving trade system. The authors of the report argue that trade is the lifeblood of the economy of Darfur and one of the main ways in which different ethnic and livelihood groups interact. Darfur has a three-tier market network, consisting of village and rural assembly markets, where farmers and pastoralists sell their produce, intermediate town markets where small traders trade with larger traders, and finally major town markets, also the point of export of many of Darfur's cash crops and livestock (Buchanan-Smith and Fadul, 2008: 7).

Young, Osman et al. (2005: 40) argue that in recent years, the traditional distinction between sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists no longer applied as the livelihoods of the two groups have merged. Before the intensification of hostilities in February 2003, nearly all farmers reared cattle and nearly all herders farmed. However, the distinction between the two groups, often cited as a partial cause for the conflict, is still relevant. Pressure on natural resources has contributed to conflicts locally between neighbouring groups, often played out along the lines of pastoralists versus farmers.

### **3.3.3 The effect of conflict on the food-supply to non-combatants**

The effect of conflict on the livelihood of the people of Darfur was almost immediate. It is estimated that within the first year of the conflict, the livelihoods of over a million people had been more or less destroyed due to a combination of population displacement, restricted movements, widespread destruction and looting of assets essential to the survival of the local population (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 7). The sections below will deal in more depth with the different ways the conflict affected livelihoods. Here I will outline how these livelihoods changed because of the conflict. Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars argue that few people in Darfur now have access to their pre-conflict livelihoods. Alternatively, many have become dependent on day labouring and petty trade, which is a precarious alternative to their traditional means of livelihood that is better adapted to the local conditions. Generally, this day labour is poorly remunerated and wages have fallen even more as the job market has become saturated in some areas (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 8).

Another livelihood strategy on which many people depend and especially IDPs, is the collection and sale of natural resources, such as grass and firewood. This endeavour is highly risky as it involves venturing out of towns and camps, facing the threat of attack or rape. Furthermore, access to wild foods, is severely restricted directly by combatants and more indirectly by the prevailing level of insecurity (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2007: S62-S63). De Waal compares the apocalyptic 1984 famine with the current food crisis in Darfur and concludes that the main difference in coping strategies lies in the availability of reserves. During the 1984 famine, 100,000 people died and Food Aid did not arrive in time. However, Darfur society did not collapse due to the formidable survival skills of its people. Flint and De Waal recorded an old woman saying “[w]e don’t just starve; someone must force starvation upon us” (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 146). People had stocked up on food, were able and willing to travel huge distances to search for food, work or charity and managed to gather wild foods from the bush.

“Today, food reserves and animals have been stolen, and what use is the ability to gather five different kinds of wild grasses, 11 varieties of berry, plus roots and leaves (sic), if leaving a

camp means risking rape, mutilation or death? Predictions of up to 300,000 famine deaths must be taken seriously” (De Waal, 2004: 724).

Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars conclude that while occasional and short-lived improvements in the security situation have enabled localised returns to farming, in short, any livelihood strategies that have persisted are now operating at much reduced levels. All livelihood strategies identified before the conflict are directly affected by levels of insecurity and restrictions on the movement of people and livestock as well as on trade. Furthermore, opportunities to earn an income remain very limited for most of the conflict-affected population of Darfur. Most importantly, people have little day-to-day control over their livelihoods. Combatants still determine whether people are able to return to their pre-conflict livelihoods (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2007: S63).

Concerning the lively market system existing in Darfur prior to the conflict, Buchanan-Smith and Fadul (2008: 9-14) observe that Darfur’s traders have been put to the ultimate test by the current conflict. The current conflict has seriously disturbed Darfur’s traditional market network. Farmers are unable to farm and herders cannot bring their livestock to the traders, causing severe shortages on the supply side. Trade in locally produced grain has all but collapsed since the start of the conflict as farmers became displaced and it proved difficult to transport grain from traditional surplus-producing areas to the major markets. Many rural markets have been abandoned and movements have become more restricted for fear of attacks. Moreover, many markets have relocated to rebel-held territory and are outside the reach of those staying in GoS controlled areas. One of the most striking features observed by the researchers is the emergence of major new markets in the largest IDP camps near Darfur’s state capitals. These markets are beyond the reach of the GoS and have become *de facto* tax havens, forming part of the shadow economy. The camp sheikhs usually control trade within the camps and IDPs instead of traders now dominate business. This has created a class who fares well by these new conditions. Unsurprisingly, many traders have gone out of business in recent years. Political affiliation now plays a major role in access to trade.

Of concern to the prospects of post-conflict food security in Darfur is an observation made by Bromwich and Adam (2007: 27). They outline how many of the IDP camps are located on the outskirts of towns. Towns in Darfur occur in the wadi plains<sup>10</sup> with favourable conditions for farming. This means that due to the IDP camps many of the most intensive areas of degradation are on prime farmland. This way, the soil will lose its fertility, its structure and its ability to hold water, turning into dust, which can then be eroded by wind or rain. As a result, crop yields are severely depleted. “This undermines the future food security of Darfur’s new larger settlements” (Bromwich and Adam, 2007: 27).

### **3.3.4 The role and influence of Food Aid**

Food Aid is of crucial importance to the population of Darfur as the region is currently the largest humanitarian emergency in the world. During the current crisis, the three states that make up Darfur received more Food Aid than ever before in their history. During 2005, the peak of the Food Aid

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<sup>10</sup> Wadi is the Arabic name given to a valley but it might also refer to a dry riverbed that contains water only during times of heavy rain. Wadis are a source of water for people living in rural areas, and most oases and villages have sprung up because of their proximity.

distribution, over 500,000mt of food was distributed to over three million beneficiaries (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 117). The WFP currently provides monthly food rations to approximately two million IDPs, totalling about one-third of Darfur's population. Furthermore, the WFP also provides aid to people in villages and rural areas, in an attempt to bridge the pre-harvest "hunger gap". During these peak months, food distributions in Darfur reach more than 3 million people (World Food Programme, 2009c). The overwhelming finding of many studies on Food Aid in Darfur is how valuable and significant Food Aid is as a means of subsistence. Due to Food Aid distribution, the prevalence of acute malnutrition has declined considerably (Young, 2007: S42; Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 117-118).

However, there is another, less obvious reason why Food Aid is so important in Darfur. Food Aid affects its beneficiaries in two ways. It is not just used for consumption but also provides an income transfer. This income transfer again has two faces. Food Aid rations release income that would otherwise have to be spent on food but they can also be sold directly. This second function of Food Aid, the income transfer, is especially significant for IDPs with few other sources of income, and was frequently identified by them as the most important source of livelihood, contributing between 40-80%. It has been described as "their ticket into the market economy" (Hamid et al, 2005: 34). In the traditionally most food insecure North Darfur, the relative importance of Food Aid appeared greatest.

Food Aid has been instrumental in keeping grain prices down and keeping markets functioning. Due to the conflict, the trade in locally produced grain had all but collapsed as most farmers became displaced and transporting grain from surplus areas to deficit areas became too risky. This resulted in huge price differences between neighbouring areas. The trade in relief grain has compensated the collapse of the trade in locally produced grain to a considerable extent. As an example, cereal traders in Nyala's market estimated that the quantity of relief grain traded in the market outnumbered locally produced grain three to one. Similar estimates were given for other markets (Buchanan-Smith and Fadul, 2008: 15). The beneficial multiplier effect of the trade in relief grain becomes apparent in the urban markets. It provides employment for porters, who load and unload the grain, to owners of the donkey carts that transport it and to flour millers. Yet, most importantly, the availability of relief grain for trading purposes has stabilised cereal prices at a time when incomes in Darfur are severely limited. Buchanan-Smith and Fadul (2008: 16) quoted one cereal trader saying that "without food aid there would be starvation" and "[i]f it hadn't been for food aid, more traders would have gone bankrupt".

### **3.3.5 Theoretical implications**

To what extent is the impact of conflict on food security and livelihoods in Darfur in line with my hypothesis in Chapter Two? As Sen noted, food security is much more an issue of both limited *availability* of food in conjunction with imperfect *access* to food. He also argued that famine has never occurred in a functioning liberal democracy. This seems to hold true for Darfur. Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars observed that despite unfavourable climatic and geographical conditions, in the absence of conflict and very bad droughts, Darfur was normally able to achieve food self-sufficiency and the more prosperous parts of the region even managed to produce a surplus (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 7). However, as a result of

the conflict, these surpluses evaporated and any remaining surplus produce was unable to reach areas with a deficit.

Another important observation ties in with Green's argument that without war, drought in Africa has seldom resulted in massive loss of life. This seems to hold true with some reservations. Although in Darfur droughts have caused massive loss of life during the 1984 famine, especially in the absence of Food Aid, the difference with the current conflict-induced famine can be found in the undermining of traditional coping strategies that Darfuris master. The non-combatant population either has been robbed of their traditional safeguards in the form of livestock and seeds, or has chosen to sell or abandon them. Bromwich and Adam (2007: 15) record how during the 1984 famine Darfuris chose not to eat their seed or sell off livestock. Instead, they withstood remarkable periods of hunger in order to retain the capacity to rebuild their livelihood after the famine. In the current conflict-famine situation, these traditional coping strategies have proved fruitless. Young, Osman et al make a similar observation about the difference between normal and conflict famine when they write that "[e]ven during previous region-wide famines, failures of livelihoods were principally in production (farming and livestock); in nearly all cases, the collection of natural resources, migration and the sending back of remittances continued to support rural livelihoods" (Young, Osman et al., 2005: 43-44).

With regard to the effect of the conflict on the livelihoods of people, it is important to notice how traditional agricultural livelihood strategies gave way to a wage labour economy. This ad hoc economic transformation led the price of labour to drop, following the pattern described by David Keen (1994: 112). After raiding and looting disrupted economic life and stripped communities of their assets, victims tried to sell the remaining assets, including labour in order to buy grain. This led to the price of grain to go up and the remuneration for labour to plummet.

However, the second force described by Keen (1994: 112), the plummeting of the value of assets in relation to sharp increases in the price of grain, has been partially avoided in the case of Darfur, due to the strong presence of Food Aid and the impact of relief grain on the local market. Not only has the price of grain remained fairly stable due to the sale of relief grain rations, enabling the majority of people to afford this commodity, but the availability of Food Aid has also strengthened the bargaining position of wage labourers, who no longer have to accept unreasonably low wages to avoid starvation.

### **3.4 The use of food as a weapon**

#### **3.4.1 Introduction**

The previous section outlined the direct and indirect effects of conflict on livelihood strategies in Darfur. Livelihoods have changed drastically and food security has been severely undermined as a result of the current conflict between the GoS and its Janjaweed allies and the black African militia, most notably the SLA and the JEM.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> It has to be noted though that these black African militia have splintered further, limiting the chances of reaching a comprehensive peace agreement from which all parties are to gain, and that thus will be complied with. According to the UN, there are now at least a dozen factions, a number that sometimes rises and falls in the course of a single day.

This section will detail how this change in livelihoods, which I outlined above came about. Here I will provide a broad overview of the different tactics combatants employ to undermine food production and procurement, as well as the delivery of Food Aid, tying in with question eight of the set of questions. I will follow the framework laid out by Macrae and Zwi in the previous Chapter, regarding acts of omission, commission and provision. I will analyse whether and to what extent each of these acts was committed in Darfur. Thereafter, I will evaluate the (un)intentional effects of Food Aid in Darfur. This section is concluded by an overview of the theoretical implications that follow when applying the hypotheses of Chapter Two to the case of Darfur. Here, I will give special attention to the theoretical model drawn up in the previous Chapter.

### **3.4.2 Acts of omission**

Macrae and Zwi describe acts of omission as “failures to act” (1994:11). Such acts are instances where food supplies are misused or “where governments fail to monitor adequately and plan for food security in all sections of a country; it identifies the failure of governments to manage food reserves and to instigate and facilitate appropriate emergency measures” (Macrae and Zwi 1992: 301). In Darfur, there are a number of acts, committed mainly by the GoS, which would qualify as acts of omission. This section will provide a general, but by no means complete overview of these acts.

In the background to the conflict provided above, I highlighted the systematic marginalisation of Darfur by the GoS. Since the nineteenth century, the government in Khartoum has marginalised Darfur. Although the region’s contribution to the economic welfare of the country has been significant, it has only profited marginally from the ensuing development, and has had a limited say in decision-making. The most basic public services are lacking in the region, and those that do exist face a continual decline. This includes the judiciary, police, health services, infrastructure and education. Exemplary to the decline of the latter is the drop in literacy levels by more than one-third between 1993 and 2002, compared to only a 2.9 percent drop in North Sudan as a whole. Furthermore, the continually declining state of infrastructure makes it increasingly difficult to transport food surpluses to those areas in need (Young, Osman et al., 2005: 45).

Another act of omission committed by the GoS is the closing of the national border with Libya in May 2003. The decision to close the border with Libya served to prevent recruitment by rebel groups of Darfuri migrant workers in Libya. However, its effect was to stop the flourishing livestock export trade and to limit the rebels’ ability to accrue benefit from their control over these trade routes, for example through imposing taxes (Young, Osman et al. 2005: 48). However, these trade routes also served to bring food supplies to the markets in Darfur and were especially important in times of scarcity. After the closing of the border, some smuggling started. However, these smuggling operations were highly risky and therefore

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These black African factions are united in their struggle against the Janjaweed, as well as by their goal of attaining economic and political equality for Darfuris. However, they are divided by history, internal power struggles and fractured lines of communication. Since the onset of the conflict, the SLA splintered into a number of factions, such as the SLM-Minni, not to be confused with SLM-Free Will, SLM-Unity or Greater-SLM and the SLM-Al Nur. Then again, the Minni faction is not to be lumped together with G-19, an umbrella group under the umbrella of the National Redemption Front (McCrummen, 2007).

only involved valuable items such as camels (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 60). The fact that no grain was smuggled is a valuable observation and is a recurrent theme in many conflicts of a similar nature. Kaplan (2003: 192) noticed a similar trend in South Sudan during the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) between the GoS and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). He describes how no relief food was reaching those in need, yet

“[a]t this point, the only supplies not in short supply in southern Sudan were salt, sweets, liquor, and cigarettes, which until a few weeks before - rebel anti-aircraft fire notwithstanding - pilots had been willing to fly in on account of the high prices these items fetched. Grain just brought too small a profit for a pilot to risk losing his life” (Kaplan, 2003: 192).

Finally, another important act of omission committed by the GoS concerned its policy to sell vast quantities of its own crops to other countries, in order to capitalize on high global food prices. This is clearly a failure on the part of the GoS to monitor food reserves adequately and to facilitate appropriate emergency measures. It should have used these food surpluses to increase levels of food security and should have distributed them to regions with a food deficit, such as Darfur, rather than sell them to the highest bidder. This occurs at the same time when the country is receiving billions of dollars of free food from international donors, such as the WFP. The government in Khartoum laid out huge fields in the desert, cultivating amongst others beans, wheat, sorghum and melons, initially in an attempt to create Sudanese self-sufficiency. However, while Darfur is starving, the government decided to sell these reserves instead to countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In 2007, the United States government shipped 283,000 tons of sorghum into Darfur. That seems to be about the same amount of sorghum that the GoS exported (Gettleman, 2008).

Eric Reeves, a professor at Smith College and an outspoken activist who has written frequently on the Darfur crisis, called this anomaly “one of the least reported and most scandalous features of the Khartoum regime's domestic policies” (Reeves, 2008). *New York Times* reporter Jeffrey Gettleman quotes UN officials as having said that if they do not bring food into Darfur, the government surely will not. Director of the WFP Program in Sudan Kenro Oshidari argued that Sudan could be self-sufficient in terms of food production and would even have the potential to be the breadbasket of Africa. “The last time the government gave the World Food Program (sic) any food for Darfur was in 2006. It was 22,000 tons of Sudanese-grown sorghum. It was a fraction of what the people needed, United Nations officials said, and some of the grain was rancid and infested with weevils” (Gettleman, 2008).

### **3.4.3 Acts of commission**

Attacks on livelihoods in the form of attacks on food production and procurement form an integral part of the different battle tactics in Darfur and a complete and detailed account of these atrocities would go beyond the scope of this case study. These attacks on food production and procurement fall in the category of acts of commission (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 303; Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 13-19). Acts under this heading relate to those actions that effectively undermine agricultural production and obstruct coping strategies. This category also includes attacks of Food Aid convoys, safe corridors and markets, and forced

population relocation. They differ from acts of omission in that they do not require a large-scale government policy and are more direct in nature.

The most widely reported attack on food production in Darfur consists of the burning of farmland and villages. Two departing leaders of the current UN/African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) recently claimed that the war in Darfur is over, and has devolved into a “low-intensity” security problem. Eric Reeves reacted to this statement that the only reason why the conflict in Darfur could currently be described as “low intensity” would be that “there is relatively little that remains in the way of promising new targets of opportunity among the villages and lands of non-Arab or African populations of Darfur” (Reeves, 2008). The black African population of Darfur made up over two-thirds of the population prior to the conflict. Most statistics put the entire population of Darfur at six million before 2003. Taking current estimates of the remaining non-Arab population in Darfur into account, this means that approximately 70 to 85 percent of the African population is either displaced or dead (Reeves, 2009).

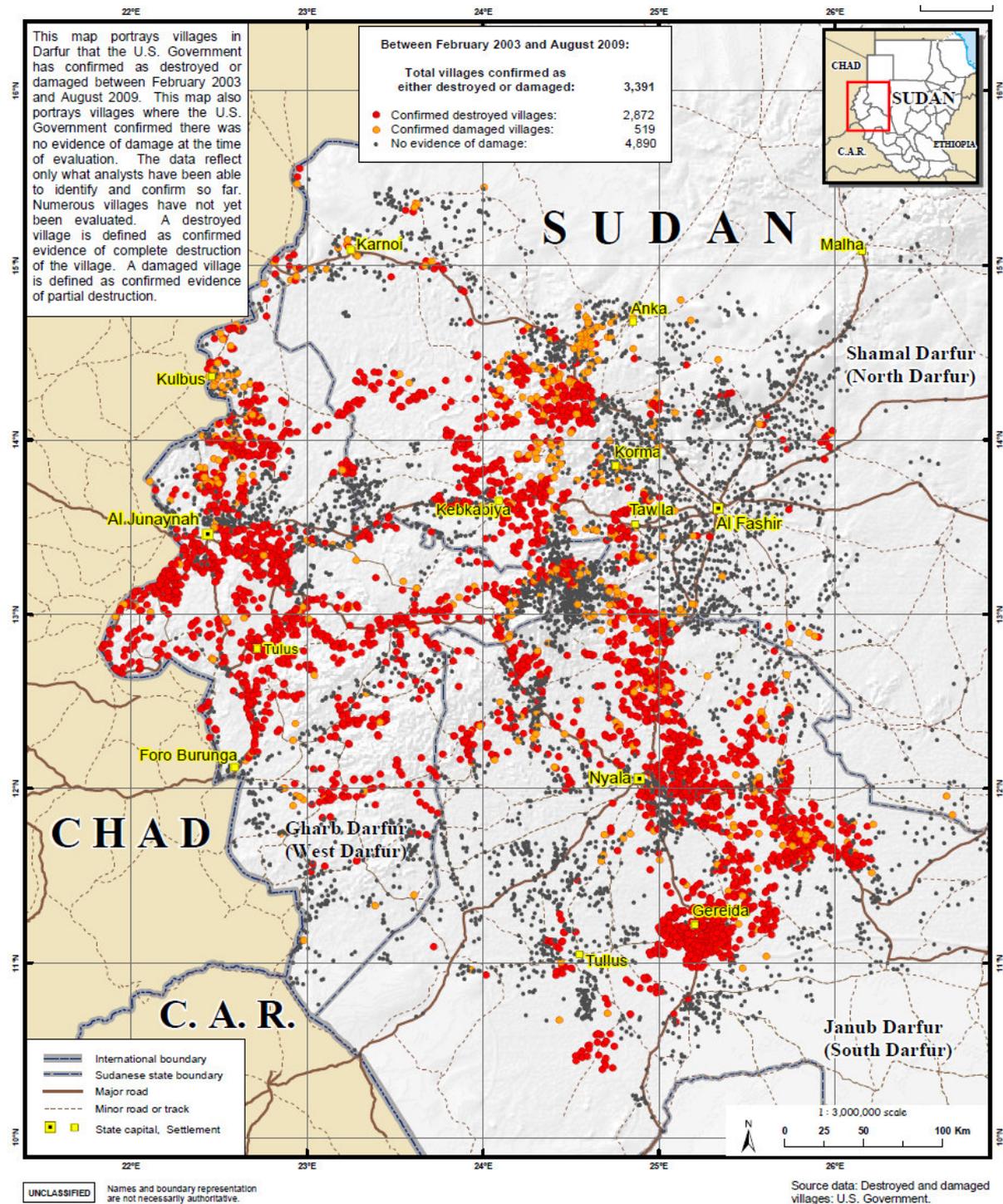
Furthermore, new data released by Google Earth show that over 3,300 villages in Darfur have been destroyed during the period of greatest violence immediately following the intensification of hostilities in February 2003. The highly detailed photographs available via Google Earth do not indicate the villages that were simply abandoned for fear of impending attacks (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2009). The total share of abandoned and destroyed villages is estimated around 80 to 90 percent (Reeves, 2009). The next page shows a map of villages in Darfur that have been damaged or destroyed from the beginning of the conflict in 2003 until August 2009. Flint and De Waal recount how in the early stages of the conflict “[g]overnment and Janjawiid (sic) forces destroyed everything that made life possible. Food that could be carried away was; the rest was burned. Animals that could be taken away were; the rest were killed” (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 145). Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars (2006: 43) recognize a pattern in which the destruction of assets took place.

“Typically attacks on villages resulted in: the burning of houses and all household goods; the loss or destruction of agricultural tools; the looting and destruction of food and seed stocks; looting of livestock; the looting or destruction of irrigation pumps; attacks on shops and grinding mills; and the looting of deployment assets such as revolving funds and grain banks.”

Furthermore, during the attacks aimed at the different black African groups, the Janjaweed are meticulous in leaving nothing useful behind for those wishing to return home. Their tactics strongly suggest a degree of central coordination and different sources provide accounts of the Janjaweed rebels being instructed by Khartoum to leave nothing behind that would enable the local population to return (Sundberg and Stern, 2007). By cutting down fruit trees or destroying irrigation ditches the Janjaweed eradicate farmers' claims to the land and ruin their livelihoods (De Waal, 2004: 73-24). “Pumps were smashed and wells polluted – often with corpses” (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 145). Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars (2006: 44) confirm this observation. The Janjaweed seem to have deliberately attacked important natural assets. Fruit trees, which usually require approximately fifteen years to grow back and carry fruit, were cut down and hand-dug wells had been destroyed or contaminated.

The different livelihood groups, farmers versus pastoralist, use their means of livelihood to actively destroy that of the other group. The incidence of the destruction of crops by grazing animals is a

common feature for farmers in Darfur. This represents an effort to destroy the livelihoods of these farming communities. On the other hand, pastoralists have reported instances of extensive burning of fields by farmers, in order to make them useless for herders to graze their cattle (Bromwich and Adam, 2007: 18).



**Map 2: Damaged and Destroyed villages in Darfur February 2003- August 2009** (United States Department of State - Humanitarian Information Unit (HIU), 2009).

Although the burning of farmland mostly affected the sedentary black African farmers, all sides suffered raids on livestock. The majority of the population of Darfur seems to have lost their livestock. Not only raids caused these livestock losses. Both Arabs and black Africans feared that owning livestock would

make them more vulnerable to attacks and thus resorted to distress sales. In 2004, the FAO estimated that livestock losses in GoS-held areas were around 90 percent. In SLA-controlled areas, this percentage was between 60 and 90. In the first year of the conflict, livestock prices more or less collapsed due to the flooding of the market (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 45-46).

Flint and De Waal (2008: 136) remark how black African militia sometimes deliberately target food production in the form of livestock in order to ambush civilians. In March 2004, Minni Minawi's troops attacked west of the town of Mellit and seized a small herd of goats as well as a retarded shepherd. When the villagers found out about the attack, they deliberated about what to do. "The Mahamid [this specific Arab group] had learned earlier that when the Zaghawa [the attacking group] attack and capture animals, if you go after them, you will fall into an ambush". Initially, the villagers decided not to pursue the attackers and just take the same number of goats from any Zaghawa group they would come across at a later stage. However, after being accused of cowardice by some of their women, a party of over 20 men set out to recapture the animals. Early in the morning, they were ambushed and only four made it back. The other men were killed and their bodies severely mutilated. Cynically enough, Reeves observes that "[t]he looting of cattle and livestock is no longer as powerful an incentive for Janjaweed militia precisely because of the ghastly successes of previous village raids" (Reeves, 2008).

Yet, according to many sources, the most fundamental problem currently affecting the population of Darfur in terms of livelihoods is the profound level of insecurity (Reeves, 2009). This state of insecurity continues as a result of the continued fighting. Consequently, the towns in Darfur have come under siege, as venturing outside of the towns or camps is a life threatening expedition. People living in SLA controlled areas often find no markets within reach but are barred from visiting markets in GoS controlled areas. The high levels of insecurity have also severely limited the cultivation of fields and blocked migration routes have led to overgrazing as livestock is unable to move (Young, Osman et al., 2005: 46-47; Bromwich and Adam, 2007: 22).

Although the UNAMID peacekeepers labelled the situation in Darfur a "low-intensity" conflict, humanitarian aid organizations are severely affected by the continuing insecurity. A number of prominent organisations, such as the WFP have announced on multiple occasions that if the security situation does not improve significantly, they will have to suspend food distributions in Darfur until the security situation improves. "If insecurity - from whatever source(s) - collapses present international humanitarian operations, there will be hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths, and it will not matter whether or not they are described as "low intensity"" (Reeves, 2009).

Proof for the statement that the Janjaweed deliberately aimed to undermine and annihilate the means of existence of black African groups can be found in other types of attacks than the ones mentioned above. Flint and De Waal (2008: 134) describe the case of the village of Girgira close to the border with Chad, where militia from West Darfur were said to have killed 148 people in a raid. At the scene "[m]any hundreds of cooking bowls and utensils were littered around - they all had had a bullet put through them, rendering them useless (...). This was not just a frenzy of murder. Time had been taken to target the things

that would make it difficult for people to survive”. In essence, such attacks are attacks on coping strategies, as identified by Macrae and Zwi.

A related strategy is the deliberate targeting of firewood patrols. This is gender-based violence, as women venture out of the towns and camps in search of firewood. Men searching for firewood risk a fatal beating, while women risk being raped (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 145; Young, 2007: S50). However, cooking fuel is necessary in order to prepare the food rations distributed by the WFP. Moreover, there are numerous accounts of how armed men, “guarding” the IDP camps stopped food entering the camps, even the wild foods gathered by the IDPs and took it for themselves and their camels (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 146).

#### **3.4.4 Acts of provision: attacks on Food Aid**

Finally, this section will highlight acts of provision, which involve a differential supply of food. “Food may be selectively provided to government supporters, to those from whom support is sought, or to lure sections of the populations to areas controlled by the military” (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 19). Such acts often involve control over Food Aid and a distribution of such aid to those for whom it originally was not meant. Acts of provision, especially involving the obstruction of Food Aid distribution have been commonplace in Sudan in previous conflicts and form an essential part of the current conflict strategies. “The government deployed long years of expertise in delaying and blocking relief operations with a farrago of bureaucratic entanglements” (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 145).

Thus, humanitarian aid workers face a wide array of obstructions that inhibit the effective distribution of Food Aid. Not only are relief workers severely obstructed, but also the militia responsible for high levels of insecurity remain unhindered. “In spite of government of Sudan promises to expedite the provision of assistance, bureaucratic barriers placed in front of aid agencies significantly inhibit immediate action” (Moszynski, 2004: 1275).

According to Flint and De Waal, “[h]uman catastrophe was a deliberate act” (2008: 145). Between the start of the conflict and the beginning of 2005, nearly two million people had been driven to camps and towns inside Darfur, and another 200,000 had crossed the border into Chad. However, the GoS made it their goal to prevent humanitarian aid organisations from reaching the IDPs. “Aid workers needed visas to enter Sudan, travel permits to Darfur, daily travel permits to leave the state capitals, and fuel permits to travel around Darfur” (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 146).

Yet, when conditions in the camps became intolerable, instead of allowing relief into the camps, the GoS tried to make the camps go away. In 2007, International Crisis Group wrote that the GoS was aware that the plight of the IDP’s galvanised world opinion. The IDPs managed to keep Darfur in the world’s spotlights, due to the horrifying reports coming out of the camps. Thus, part of Khartoum’s strategy has been to push the IDPs to leave the camps. For example in 2005, the government attempted to get residents of Kalma and other camps to return home. To this end, Khartoum paid leaders of the different ethnic groups, and offered the IDPs food and transport. When all else failed, the government troops resorted to force. Furthermore, the GoS also upped the pressure on NGOs and the UN to empty the camps,

by insinuating that they were not doing enough to encourage IDPs to return home. The GoS even went as far as to blame the humanitarian community for prolonging the crisis for “ulterior motives” (International Crisis Group, 2007: 7).

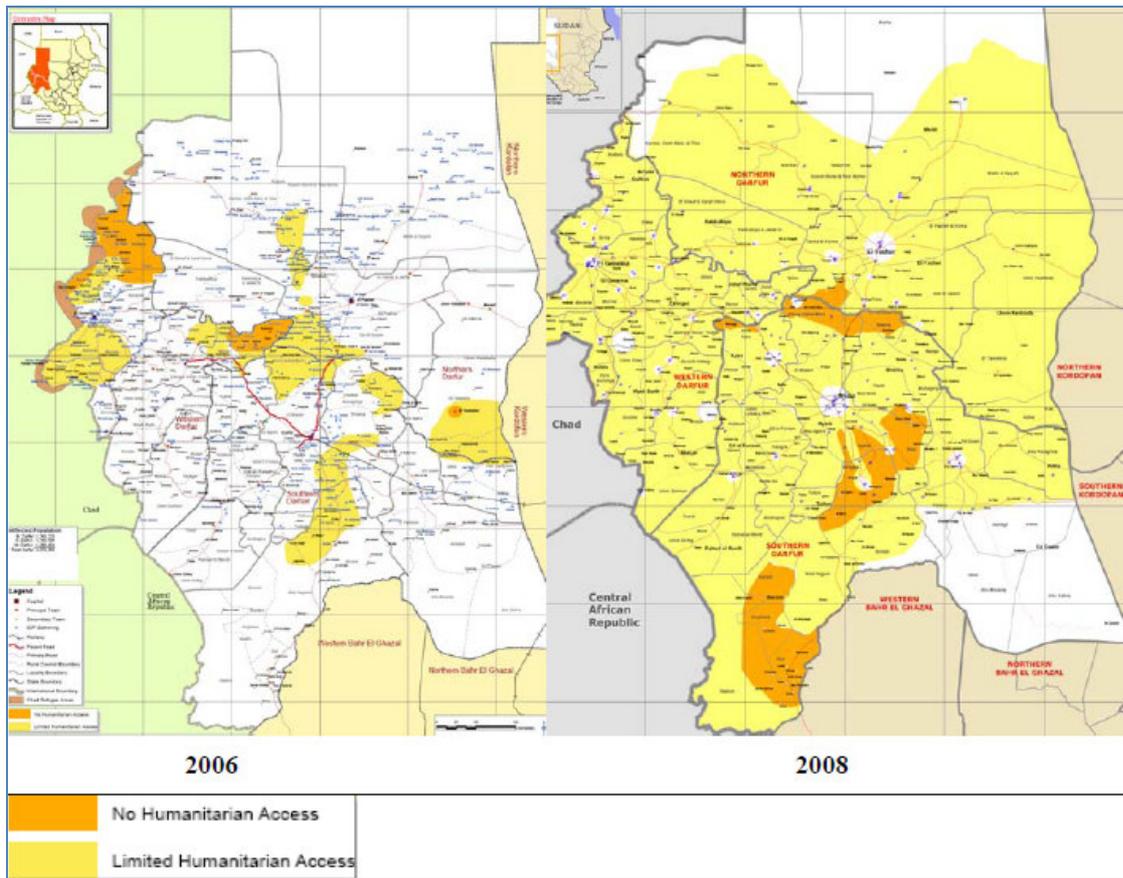
In July 2004, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan visited a number of camps in Darfur. At the first camp he was supposed to visit, in al Fasher, upon arrival he only found “stagnant puddles and dead donkeys”, but no people. According to the GoS officials present, the camp had been cleared just a few days before for the unlikely reason that it had “no sanitation”. Another camp near al Fasher was equally deserted, while Annan’s aides had seen it brimming with life a mere 24 hours earlier. According to government officials, the IDPs moved to the outskirts of town because the camp would flood when the rains came. What really happened was this: the IDPs were simply loaded onto trucks and dumped at the gates of another already overcrowded camp (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 146-47).

As mentioned above, the current state of insecurity in Darfur cripples Food Aid operations. Protecting humanitarian aid just seems not to be in Khartoum’s interest. According to one well-informed UN official, “[t]he vast majority of attacks on humanitarians occur in main towns and state capitals - where the Government of Sudan has absolute control. It is simply not in their interests to improve security” (Reeves, 2008). Maps 3 and 4 depict the decline in humanitarian access from 2006 to 2008, as well as the current situation in 2009.

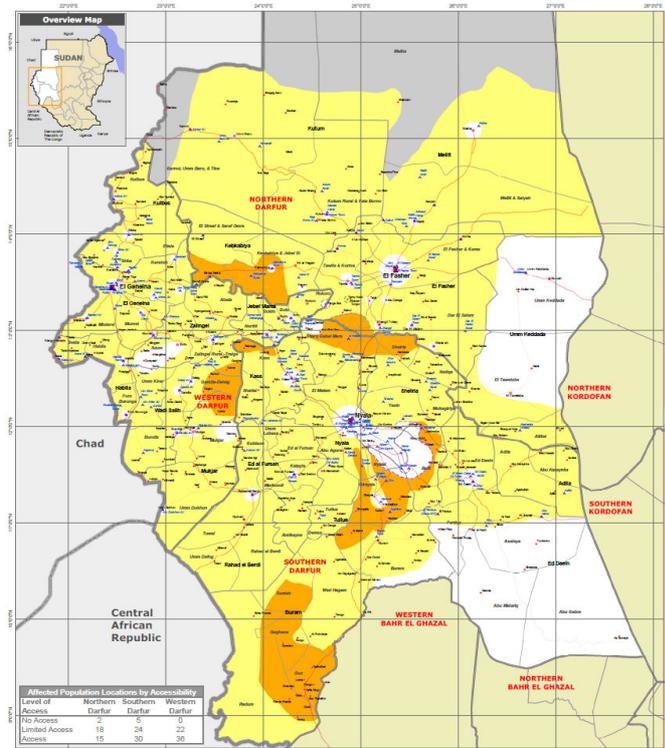
Since the beginning of 2008, the WFP has been warning that banditry and attacks have been impeding its operations. The dramatic decline in security has caused a major reduction in food deliveries to Darfur (World Food Programme, 2008a). Most humanitarian operations and international humanitarian workers have retreated to urban areas, where there are still shockingly violent attacks, official harassment, car jackings, and banditry. There has also been an alarming increase in the kidnapping of aid workers.

Between March and August 2009, five groups of international humanitarian workers were kidnapped throughout Darfur. At the moment of writing, two international aid workers remain hostage following their abduction in July in North Darfur (USAID, 2009). “Much of this violence is clearly condoned by Khartoum in a ruthless war of attrition against humanitarian operations” (Reeves, 2009). In 2008, the WFP even put the following plea on its website: “We urge other groups who have seized trucks and drivers to release them, unharmed. At stake are thousands of people in Darfur, who are reliant on the food lifeline the relief truck convoys provide” (World Food Programme, 2008a).

In March 2009, the GoS singlehandedly decided to expel 13 important international aid groups. The decision to expel the aid groups was made well before the International Criminal Court announced its arrest warrant for the Sudanese president Al-Bashir, but seems to be clearly linked to this event. The GoS accused the NGOs of collaborating with the Court by providing evidence and helping prosecutors gather testimony from victims (Addario and Polgreen, 2009). The aid agencies affected include the International Rescue Committee, CARE, Oxfam Great Britain, Save the Children and Médecins Sans Frontières. Together, they represent about 40 percent of the international and local aid workers in Darfur. Although other NGOs announced their intention to take over wherever possible, the decision by Khartoum was expected to leave 1.1 million people without food (MacFarquhar and Simons, 2009).



**Map 3: Decline of humanitarian access 2006-2008** (Young and Maxwell, 2009: 13).



**Map 4: Humanitarian access as of July 2009** (United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2009).

The expulsion of the aid workers was carried out with utmost efficiency as well as aggression. Government forces arrived at the offices of several charities and ordered workers to leave, before seizing

valuable equipment (Addario and Polgreen, 2009). Some aid workers were detained, while Sudanese officials walked off with computers, cash and other assets (MacFarquhar and Simons, 2009). *The New York Times* quoted one senior aid official involved saying: “This was in the works for a long time (...). They had been waiting for a chance to strike out at these organizations” (Addario and Polgreen, 2009).

However, selective provisioning of food is not solely confined to the distribution of relief rations. Young, Osman et al (2005: 48) describe the restrictions placed by the GoS on food purchases and movements. Buchanan-Smith and Fadul (2008: 12) observe a similar pattern concerning access to trade. “Political affiliation now plays a role in terms of access to trade. Politics has forced some urban traders out of business, and members of political/rebel movements are given preferential treatment to move commodities through areas controlled by their faction.” Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars (2006: 72) note how in certain areas, some groups are favoured over others in terms of restrictions on movement and thus their ability to farm or herd livestock. In GoS held areas, “Arab pastoralist populations and other tribes aligned with the GoS are able to move freely throughout the area, but (...) the movement of the Fur and some other groups is extremely restricted.”

An example in this regard is the town of Kutum, which hosts an important market for North Darfur. Kutum market is vital to the rural areas, including those controlled by the SLA. Furthermore, there is now a large IDP camp on the outskirts of the town. Khartoum’s Military Intelligence and Security (MIS) carefully monitors and controls access to the market by residents living outside the town boundaries inside rebel territory, including IDPs from the camp. These people have to apply for a permit, which allows them to buy a limited quota of goods and to transport them beyond the town boundary. The permit is costly and only valid for a day. Only the items listed on the permit may be purchased and the goods are inspected at military checkpoints. Any goods not specified on the permit will be confiscated (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 72).

### **3.4.5 The (un)intentional effects of Food Aid on the conflict**

Although accounts of Food Aid distribution in Darfur have generally been favourable, especially when taking the sheer magnitude of the operation into account, some malignant effects of Food Aid have been recorded. Young, Osman et al. (2005: 46) describe how Food Aid is generally biased against the Arab population.

“[S]ince the first major international relief programmes of the 1980s, Arab groups have been at the back of the queue for relief, in that they are usually considered last and receive less than their fair share. Several Arab groups commented that international organisations rarely employ Arabs; this is seen as part of their wider marginalisation in Darfur and as a strategy on the part of non-Arab groups to dominate these external resources.”

In the case of Darfur, the fact that these Arab pastoralists were the last to receive relief has also been discussed by Keen (1991), who argues that these remote pastoralist groups have a history of being last in line for any Food Aid.

Furthermore, in some instances, leaders have also been able to distort aid for their own benefit. In part due to the disorganised nature of many IDP camps, many groups have become separated from their leadership and numbers of aid beneficiaries are therefore not always clear. “In some places, leaders have

misused their authority to manipulate and profit from aid distributions” (Young, Osman et al, 2005: 46). At a later stage, Young writes: “[r]eports of manipulation [of Food Aid] by sheikh cartels, and resulting errors of inclusion and exclusion and over-registration, were widespread” (2007: S50). She reports that in Darfur there have been instances of taxation of food and a great deal of manipulation in order to maximise the amount of Food Aid to be delivered. Young argues that in Darfur, too little attention has been given to the way Food Aid supports “wider local interests, power politics and a developing war economy” (Young, 2007: S51).

Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars confirm this observation. They argue that the ability to influence food distribution creates a very powerful position, especially in the IDP camps, where Food Aid is essentially the only resource available. The impact of Food Aid is not just confined to the realm of traditional leadership but also extends to political and military leadership.

“The presiding authorities, whether different SLA factions or GoS officers, compete for aid resources in areas they control or want to control. The distribution of food aid can be seen as legitimising their control, and the more resources they can pull in the better the leadership may be perceived. This in turn leads to political leadership being increasingly vocal about needs in their particular areas of control, tending to exaggerate numbers in need” (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 122).

Essentially, targeting decisions made by Food Aid distributors like the WFP not only affect who receives which amount of Food Aid, but also stimulates local systems of patronage, which at a later stage could be a renewed basis for conflict. In Darfur, it is not uncommon that local leaders charge the group members in cash or kind for services like getting the food from the distribution centre. This payment is usually one Sudanese pound per household every month directly to the sheikh. A 2007 WFP report estimated that 13 percent of households had to pay to receive their relief rations (Young and Maxwell, 2009: 28).

An interesting aspect of these unintentional effects of Food Aid on conflict dynamics relates to the question whether organisations like the WFP are responsible for the protection of the beneficiaries of their relief, when dangers to these beneficiaries’ security directly arise out of the distribution of the aforementioned aid. Observations in Darfur confirm the idea that militia specifically target those groups that possess foodstuff or other valuable items, which they can loot. During 2004, Young recorded that IDPs did not want to receive any food rations or other types of relief, as they felt this would actually attract Janjaweed and security forces to their town. They made it clear that they required protection rather than assistance (Young, 2007: S49). This confirms Keen’s (1994: 121) observation during a previous conflict in Sudan, where it was not the victims’ endemic poverty, which exposed them to food insecurity but in many aspects precisely their assets, which made them vulnerable. These assets combined with political underrepresentation of the southern Sudanese peoples, most notably the Dinka, exposed them to the exploitative processes by those seeking control over their assets, eventually resulting in famine. A similar rationale holds true in the case of Darfur.

Young records a gender-based protection issue associated with Food Aid. This related to the need for women to venture out of the relative safety of the IDP camps in search of firewood needed to cook the WFP rations they received. The risks facing men in undertaking such an endeavour were even worse than

those facing women. Men had a high chance of receiving a fatal beating by the militia patrolling outside the camps. Women on the other hand were often raped on these trips. To anticipate this danger, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) occasionally set up firewood patrols, during which they accompanied the women on their search for cooking fuel. However, these patrols were occasionally attacked as well, and were in any case too irregular to form an effective solution to the problem (Young, 2007: S50).

Finally, Gettleman makes the point that food relief has justified far-reaching social transformation. The government of Sudan has prioritised attracting large-scale commercial agricultural projects. These projects often require significant relocation of populations. This leads smallholder food production to go down and commercial food production to go up. Food relief serves as a “subsidy” to this transformation, since it keeps the displaced alive. The Sudanese government has been widely accused of running many in Darfur off their farms and in turn making them dependent on humanitarian handouts. Their land could then be resettled by those loyal to the government (Gettleman, 2008).

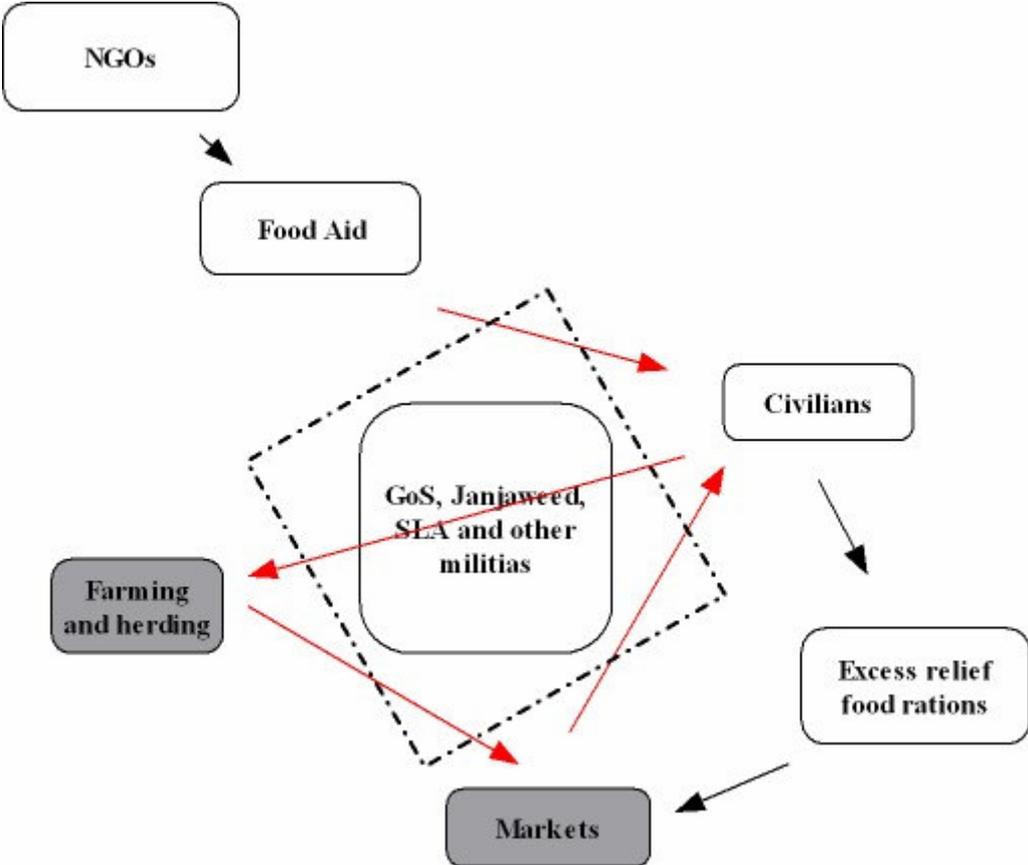
### **3.4.6 Conclusion and theoretical implications**

The use of food as a weapon in Darfur bears strong resemblance to the theoretical framework outlined in the previous Chapter. The division made by Macrae and Zwi between acts of omission, commission and provision applies to this case, although the lines are sometimes blurred and several acts might qualify for multiple headings. It is interesting to note how all three types of acts work to reinforce each other and should be seen as part of a complete strategy for civil conflict, used by most sides, in which the use of food as a weapon plays a crucial role. Food production and procurement in Darfur forms the foundation under the existence of the different ethnic groups living in the region. They are indeed defined by their means of food production, as farmers and pastoralists have turned on one another.

Furthermore, the four phases described by David Keen (1994: 112) were all present in Darfur. First, raiding, looting and the burning of villages disrupted economic life and led to major population displacement. Thereafter, victims tried to sell the remaining assets, often out of fear of such assets exposing them to more violence. Grain prices initially shot up and the livestock market nearly collapsed. However, contrary to Keen’s analysis, in Darfur, the large-scale sale of relief grain had an immensely stabilizing effect on the grain market. In line with Keen, the third force consisted of the restriction of non-market strategies of survival. After the IDPs reached the camps and were unable to farm, they resorted to collecting wild foods. However, such trips turned into hazardous expeditions after rebel movements virtually laid siege to many of the camps. Finally, Keen predicts that a variety of politically influential groups with a stake in prolonging the conflict will try to prevent the delivery of relief. This fourth force is also present in Sudan, where the GoS largely engineered the humanitarian crisis. The delivery of Food Aid is being undermined on a daily basis. The next section will pay more attention the rationale behind the attacks on Food Aid and the use of food as a weapon in general.

Figure 5 provides a visual summary of the use of food as a weapon in Darfur. In the previous Chapter, I provided four different scenarios relating to the use of food in conflict. The summary provided in Figure 5 is slightly different from these scenarios, yet most closely resembles Figure 4. As displayed in

Figure 5, the different groups of combatants, whether being government troops, Janjaweed, SLA or other militia, fundamentally place themselves as a barrier between civilians, their livelihoods in the form of farming and/or herding, the delivery of Food Aid to these civilians and their access to the markets. The combatants obstruct this access directly or indirectly, by means of the general level of insecurity they create. Yet, the main difference between Figure 4 and 5 is the fact that this obstruction of access is not as complete or linear as expected. NGOs manage to reach the civilian population, yet first have to surpass combatant restrictions. Similarly, civilians sometimes manage to reach their farms and cultivate or herd, yet are often obstructed or can only do so on a limited scale. The red arrows display such incomplete access. Furthermore, the grey blocks show that farming and herding, as well as market activity are greatly reduced. The dotted lines around the combatants display the obstruction they form in the natural flow of the relations between the different forces that make up normal food supply patterns. Finally, excess food, which I expected to disappear in Figure 4, has been replaced by the sale of excess relief rations. This has kept markets functioning.



**Figure 5: The use of food as a weapon in Darfur**

**3.5 The effectiveness of the “hunger weapon”**

**3.5.1 Introduction**

This section essentially deals with the “Why?” question regarding attacks on food security in Darfur. As derived from the previous Chapter, attacks on livelihoods and food security essentially serve three different

purposes, namely political, economic and military (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 301). In this section, I will outline to what extent these three different “logics” behind the use of food as a weapon apply to the case of Darfur and to what extent they are deliberate and important. This section ties in with question nine to 13 of the set of questions. The separate sections about these logics are followed by a section analysing the theoretical implications of these findings.

### **3.5.2 The political logic**

Flint and De Waal argue that in Darfur “[s]tarvation was not mere negligence – in some terrible instances, it was military strategy” (2008: 146). In 2004, in Kailak IDP camp in South Darfur, the death rate appeared to be 41 times higher than expected under a normal ‘emergency’. Attacks on villages in Darfur have destroyed between 80 to 90 percent of the total and the region, whose population was two-thirds black African, is now almost exclusively Arab. A critical part of Khartoum’s strategy has been to contain the ethnic groups affiliated with the rebels, such as the Fur, Massaleit and Zaghawa. By creating a human catastrophe that forces these groups into IDP camps, their land will become available and can thus be resettled by communities loyal to the government. Especially in the wake of the arrival of an extended peacekeeping force after the signing of the DPA in 2006, Khartoum has pursued this strategy with more aggression. By allowing the Janjaweed to destroy the livelihoods of rebel groups, Khartoum has been helping settle friendly peoples. These groups were often resettled in strategic locations, for example along the border with Chad, in order to isolate non-Arabs from their kinfolk on the other side of the border (International Crisis Group, 2007: 10-11).

The GoS is also helping to settle Arabs in areas where demographic change is essential to secure electoral victories. In an interview conducted in August 2009, Oriano Micaletti, UNAMID humanitarian liaison in Darfur confirms this strategy (Micaletti, 2009). By destroying the livelihoods of the sedentary non-Arab groups, who used to farm in these areas, and thus forcing them to either cross over into Chad or leave for IDP camps, the leading Arab-dominated National Congress Party (NCP) invests to secure electoral victories in these regions for years to come. The Arabs who settle in these areas are not necessarily part of the Janjaweed. They only arrive after the original villages are either destroyed by Janjaweed militia or given to them by the authorities. Once these groups are in place they are often heavily armed by the government on the pretext of maintaining security. However, by settling these groups in hostile territory, Khartoum effectively makes them dependent on GoS and Janjaweed protection. Protection of these ethnic groups also forms a pretext to supply the Janjaweed and other loyal militia with more arms (International Crisis Group, 2007: 10-11). Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars (2006: 33) also report that many villages were burnt either by the GoS or the Janjaweed, even after they were deserted. This leads to speculations about a GoS strategy to prevent non-Arabs from returning home.

For the Janjaweed it is also important to create a sustainable crisis. In such a crisis, Khartoum will continue to depend on its ally in Darfur and supply it with weapons and other necessities. The Janjaweed continue to create tremendous insecurity in and around many of Darfur’s IDP camps, as well as in the rural areas. Many of the Arab communities have resettled exactly in these rural areas, where most arable land is,

and new recruits for the Janjaweed's militia are drawn from these Arab groups. "[I]ndeed, this is the primary form of payment that Khartoum has offered, and the lack of additional land to seize has created tensions between various Arab tribal groups" (Reeves, 2008).

Furthermore, the population in the camps, although often hostile to the GoS knows that they are at the mercy of Khartoum, when it comes to food security. Moreover, the combatants are also aware of the power they exercise over the civilian population in terms of livelihoods. Micaletti argues: "To control food supply is a way to control the population and their action as well as their vote... this is well understood by all parties involved in the conflict" (Micaletti, 2009). When asked whether the combatants utilise the control over food supply lines to influence the behaviour of the civilian population to get the outcomes the combatants want, Micaletti remarks: "Very often" (Micaletti, 2009).

The attacks on humanitarian aid organizations as outlined above also form an essential political pressure tool for the GoS. These attacks serve as a way for the GoS to act on its discontent towards the West, since many of the aid workers are westerners and the West heavily funds the humanitarian operation in Darfur. In the history of the conflict, there have been two major waves of increased levels of violence against and obstruction of the work of relief agencies. Above, I described the second wave of attacks, which coincided with al-Bashir's arrest warrant from the ICC in The Hague.

The first wave coincided with the potential of a UN intervention into Darfur. In 2006, AMIS would be integrated into a joint UN operation. AMIS' record of accomplishment until then was extremely poor and the mission was easily circumvented and overrun by Khartoum. The GoS was afraid of losing the upper hand in case of a UN intervention in the country, especially since the mission, lacking the consent of Khartoum, was expected to be biased against the GoS. Many humanitarians believed the mere threat of UN intervention had increased the dangers facing humanitarians. Khartoum responded with xenophobic propaganda, likening Western humanitarians to "new crusaders". An MSF employee in Khartoum argued that "the increased violence against humanitarian personnel results from a deliberate strategy by the government aimed at confining aid organizations to garrison towns [and] also at resisting the threat of international intervention by holding humanitarian workers hostage" (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 197).

### **3.5.3 The economic logic**

The economic logic of attacks on food security ties in with Keen's and Rangasami's argument of winners and losers during a conflict famine. Young, Osman et al. (2005: 44) record the economic logic of perpetuating conflict famine. Much of the profit that can be made out of a humanitarian crisis relates to the mere presence of the humanitarian community. These aid workers need accommodation and often have large budgets, which need to be spent on the construction of, for example, watering holes and schools. "Profits are being made by those who exploit the situation. Rents for houses and plots of land have increased by up to five-fold, and a building boom is visibly occurring" (Young, Osman et al., 2005: 44).

Furthermore, the control over territory and trade routes can result in significant economic gains. Those lucky enough to be able to access their farms in territory held by the opposing side in the conflict can be taxed and traders find themselves stopped at numerous checkpoints, which all require some form of

payment. “Those collecting the checkpoint fees and making a livelihood out of providing protection are the ones who gain most from the current situation” (Buchanan-Smith and Fadul, 2008: 14). Centuries back, Darfur entered into the world economy by means of the camel caravans that crossed its territory. Currently, such caravans can consist of thousands of camels with a combined worth of over a million dollars. Those controlling the territory crossed by these caravans can make a lot of money by controlling this trade.

The question remains what happened to the looted livestock in Darfur. Nobody seems to know the full answer to this question. The economic logic of such looting would either entail that those perpetrating this crime would keep the livestock themselves, or try to sell it for personal gain. There are only anecdotal reports of livestock being taken out of Darfur and sold in Chad. Others report that it was killed locally to feed the militia or those who had stolen it or that it was now part of the herds of the looters. However, these anecdotal reports cannot be said to be conclusive on this point (Buchanan-Smith, 2006: 47).

Profit can also be made from the sale of relief grain rations, as traded in the IDP camps. Moreover, these rations partially make it out of the camps and are traded at the local markets. Buchanan-Smith and Fadul (2008: 17) mention evidence of military involvement in the trade of these relief rations. This means that the same groups that necessitate the distribution of Food Aid, due to the level of insecurity they create, are those that benefit economically from this Food Aid. Obviously, this creates a reinforcing cycle.

Related to this economic profit resulting out of the continued need for humanitarian assistance is the GoS’ seizure of funds of the expelled NGOs in March 2009. The reasons for this expulsion were mentioned above. The expulsion and the subsequent confiscation of assets has been a windfall for the GoS. In September 2009, Great Britain and the European Commission urged the GoS to return the assets, worth millions of dollars. Khartoum however said that it had acted within the confines of the law when it expelled the aid groups and was now allowed to redistribute the seized funds as it saw fit (Heavens, 2009).

Polman (2009: 134) confirms that what the GoS did was within the confines of the crystal clear defined Sudanese Organisation of Humanitarian and Voluntary Work Act. She argues that the NGOs knew what they were getting into and that the GoS had employed the rights issued to it by means of this Act frequently and heartily before the mass expulsion of March 2009. The NGOs were at the mercy of the GoS and were well aware of the fact that the regime turned them into cash cows. She quotes one UN employee as saying that it is a public secret amongst NGOs and donors that the GoS makes millions of dollars every three months off visas, travel and work permits and the regular extensions needed on all the above. Entering and leaving Sudan costs money. Without a permit, foreigners are not allowed to take up residence anywhere else then in Khartoum. These permits cost money and need to be reissued every two months at a cost. The amount of money and the waiting time involved in obtaining such a permit depend on the civil servant processing the permit.

The GoS’ Humanitarian Activity Council (HAC) has to approve the registration of new NGOs, at a cost, and the HAC recruits local staff for them. These local employees are obviously loyal to the GoS and function as informants. The Ministry of Finance requires the NGOs to pay income tax and insurances for all employees. The Ministry of Communication benefits as well. NGOs are not allowed to equip their staff with satellite phones. Instead, they have to get a permit with the Ministry, at a cost, which in turn allows

them to take out a contract with the state-owned Internet and telecom provider. Then there are import taxes on everything the NGOs require to operate, from their cars, which they have to rent at rental companies owned by cronies of the regime, to drugs and relief food supplies. In theory, humanitarian goods are exempt from import taxes, but not in the real world, where the GoS makes stunning amounts of money off NGOs. Polman estimates that the GoS makes approximately ten million dollars every three months off the humanitarian community (Polman, 2009: 133-36).

Finally, the primary economic logic of these attacks on food security ties in with the war economy, which is emerging in Darfur. As Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars (2006: 35) argue “[a] war economy has developed based on looting and extortion, from which certain groups in Darfur are able to benefit” (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 35). As the conflict evolved, the political rationale behind attacks on food security lost much of its meaning. This was not in the least caused by the fact that the political aim of such attacks, namely the resettlement of the most arable land by those loyal to the GoS, was to a significant extent realised.

“Officials monitoring the region and aid groups say that as the rebel groups splinter, they are increasingly moonlighting as roving bandits, attacking humanitarian organizations, African Union soldiers and whoever else might have the coveted trucks and satellite phones that are the means to power in this rugged region” (McCrummen, 2007).

### **3.5.4 The military logic**

The military logic of attacks on food security is more traditional and straightforward. Militia in Darfur need to pay and feed their troops. Micaletti confirms that amongst other important fundraising techniques, such as relatives abroad, acts of looting and banditry form an integral part of the militia’ strategies (Micaletti, 2009). Flint and De Waal note the need of unpaid militia to carry out attacks on food security so they can eat. In 1999 and increasingly in 2000, the black African militia started to attract more and more young men and needed a source of food.

“From where were they going to get their supplies? (...) [M]ost often they would look for animals to capture and slaughter. If they went after the property of their own people they would lose support, so it is better to attack their neighbours, and it so happened that those neighbours were Arabs” (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 136).

This logic also reflects in the issue of the looted livestock, which was sometimes slaughtered at the scene, in order to feed the militia (Buchanan-Smith, 2006: 47). However, when the conflict fully erupted in 2003, this military logic seemed to give way to a more political and economic logic and attacks on food security quickly surpassed those that would be justifiable from a military perspective. “With few exceptions, the abuses appeared to have no military ‘justification’” (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 145).

### **3.5.5 Conclusion and theoretical implications**

It seems to be the case in Darfur that, as the parties to the conflict splintered, the use of food as a weapon became less deliberate and more a matter of looting for personal gain and for the factions’ own nutritional needs. A political rationale was fundamental to the origins of the conflict, and still forms part of the story. However, as the conflict evolved and the groups involved splintered, this political rationale, which requires

a certain degree of coordination and planning, became less important, not in the least because the GoS and the Janjaweed more or less realised their primary political aim. A politically loyal Arab population has managed to replace the predominantly non-Arab population of Darfur.

Attacks on food security in Darfur now follow the lines of a war economy; the economic gains sustain and enrich the militia and from a military perspective, looting and pillaging provide food to feed these troops. In my opinion, the prominence of the political logic underlying attacks on food production and procurement displays a strong relationship with the degree of organisation and power of the leadership of the attacking forces. To carry out large-scale attacks on food security that surpass pillaging and looting, for example in the form of acts of omission, combatants require a certain degree of organization. Furthermore, I expect that the presence of a binding ideology or shared cultural beliefs might explain the importance of this political logic. In the case of Darfur, Arab militia allegedly talked about the black Arabs as “slaves” (Sundberg and Stern, 2007). Such slaves were deemed unworthy of the land they occupied and the food they consumed. When a common ideology, for example one that regards a certain ethnic group as inferior, is present, it might facilitate a more large-scale and organised attack on food security. In the absence of such a political logic do attacks on food security acquire a more economic nature, where combatants loot and pillage for personal gain.

Yet, despite the fact that competition over resources in the form of watering holes and arable land was getting increasingly fierce in Darfur, this is in my opinion not enough to warrant such a massive operation organized from Khartoum. The GoS could have left the dirty work to the Janjaweed and kept its own hands clean. This might have improved its relationship with the West and saved it valuable resources. These resources cannot be offset by major oilfields, as was the case in the GoS’ war with the SPLA in the South. Flint and De Waal (2008: 149) have asked themselves the same question: “What was Khartoum’s calculation? How could it inflict such atrocities on a civilian population, creating such a humanitarian catastrophe, and expect to escape crisis at home and censure abroad?”

Part of the answer to this question can be found in the fact that the operation in Darfur was in the hands of the MIS, which had no interest in either internal dissent or external pressure. While Darfur was screened off by the different Security agencies, the rest of the GoS went into denial. Furthermore, government leaders miscalculated the extent and the length of the operation, as well as the outrage this operation caused in the West (International Crisis Group, 2007). “[B]ecause Darfur has neither Christians nor oil, in any significant quantities, they thought that the western world would give them a free hand in Darfur, happy to see peace in the South at last” (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 149). These calculations proved to be fatally flawed.

### **3.6 Conclusion and implications**

The aim of this chapter was to analyse the use of food as a weapon in the conflict in Darfur, using the theory derived from Chapter Two. By applying this theory to the case of Darfur, I was able to distinguish a certain pattern in the actions of combatants that manipulate food security in order to get specific outcomes that favour their position.

The first section provided a background to the conflict. The conflict in Darfur has economic, political, and ethnic dimensions. The competition between Arab pastoralists and African agriculturalists over resources, such as land and water, form the main economic dimensions. Marginalisation of Darfur within Sudan and the Arabs within Darfur form the political component. Finally, the ethnic component means that civilians deliberately are being targeted based on their ethnicity.

The humanitarian consequences of the conflict in Darfur have been dire. Close to three million people have been internally displaced. Estimates from a number of international agencies put the total civilian mortality rate due to the conflict at more than 200,000. This includes deaths from violence, malnutrition and disease. These same estimates hold the Sudanese government and Janjaweed militia responsible for 79 percent of civilian deaths. Of those killed by the GoS and the Janjaweed, 88 percent are civilians. For the conflict as a whole, civilians account for between 65 and 70 percent of all fatalities (Genocide Intervention Network, 2009). Many people have lost their homes and their livelihoods and have become dependent on relief handouts. The population of Darfur is faced with too few livelihood options to construct a sustainable living (Pantuliano et al, 2009: 2).

The second section outlined the effects of the conflict on livelihoods in Darfur. This section confirmed the suspicion that food insecurity in Darfur is much more an issue of both limited *availability* of food in conjunction with imperfect *access* to food. In the absence of conflict and very bad droughts, Darfur was normally able to achieve food self-sufficiency and the more prosperous parts of the region even managed to produce a surplus (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 7). Although in Darfur droughts have caused massive loss of life during the 1984 famine, the difference with the current conflict-induced famine can be found in the undermining of the traditional coping strategies that Darfuris master.

As a result of the conflict, traditional agricultural livelihood strategies in Darfur gave way to a wage labour economy. This ad hoc economic transformation led the price of labour to drop, following the pattern described by David Keen (1994: 112). After raiding and looting disrupted economic life and stripped communities of their assets, victims tried to sell the remaining assets, including labour, in order to buy grain. This led the price of grain to go up and the remuneration for labour to plummet. However, the plummeting of the value of assets in relation to sharp increases in the price of grain, has been partially avoided in the case of Darfur, due to the strong presence of Food Aid and the impact of relief grain on the local market.

In the third section, I noted that the use of food as a weapon in Darfur bears strong resemblance to the theoretical framework outlined by Macrae and Zwi in the previous Chapter. The division between acts of omission, commission and provision applies to this case, although the lines are sometimes blurred and several acts might qualify for multiple headings. Keen predicts that a variety of politically influential groups with a stake in prolonging the conflict will try to prevent the delivery of relief. In Sudan, the GoS largely engineered the humanitarian crisis and the delivery of Food Aid is being undermined on a daily basis. In this section, I presented a visual summary of the use of food as a weapon in Darfur. In this case, the different groups of combatants, whether being government troops, Janjaweed, SLA or other militia, fundamentally place themselves as a barrier between civilians, their livelihoods in the form of farming

and/or herding, the delivery of Food Aid to these civilians and their access to the markets. The combatants obstruct this access directly or indirectly, by means of the general level of insecurity they create.

The main difference between the situation in Darfur and the scenario provided in Figure 4 of Chapter Two is that the obstruction of access to means of livelihoods by combatants is not as complete as expected. NGOs first have to surpass combatants' restrictions, but manage to reach the civilian population to a considerable extent. Likewise, civilians sometimes manage to cultivate or herd, but are often obstructed or can only do so on a limited scale. Farming and herding, as well as market activity, is greatly reduced, but has not disappeared altogether. In Darfur, excess food, which I expected to disappear in Figure 4, has been replaced by the sale of excess relief rations, which kept markets functioning.

Finally, section four outlined the three different logics behind the use of food as a weapon in Darfur, namely political, economic and military. All three logics have been and to some extent are still present in this case, yet their relative importance has changed over time. It seems to be the case in Darfur that, as the parties to the conflict splintered the use of food as a weapon became less calculated and more a matter of looting for personal gain and for the factions' own nutritional needs. Attacks on food security in Darfur now follow the lines of a war economy; the economic gains sustain and enrich the militia and from a military perspective, looting and pillaging provide food to feed these troops. An important exception to this trend is the fact that the GoS manages to make a considerable amount of money off the humanitarian agencies operating in the country.

In my opinion, the prominence of the political logic underlying attacks on food production and procurement displays a strong relationship with the degree of organisation and power of the leadership of the attacking forces. Furthermore, I expect that the presence of a binding ideology or shared cultural beliefs might explain the importance of this political logic.

Yet, despite the fact that competition over resources in the form of watering holes and arable land was getting increasingly fierce in Darfur, this is in my opinion not enough to warrant such a colossal operation organized from Khartoum. Government leaders miscalculated the scope and the duration of the operation, as well as the outrage it caused in the West (International Crisis Group, 2007). They expected that the West would turn a blind eye, since the Darfur region possessed no significant mineral wealth, nor a large Christian population, and would give preference to the peace process in the South (Flint and De Waal, 2008: 149). It turned out that Khartoum had made a major miscalculation in this respect.

# Civil conflict and food insecurity in Somalia

## 4.1 Introduction

In this second case study, I will apply the theory and literature from Chapter Two to the case of Somalia.<sup>12</sup> Just as in the previous case study concerning Darfur, I will be evaluating the hypotheses outlined in the first Chapter in order to provide insight into the use of attacks on food security as a weapon in African civil conflict. In order to write this case study, I have made use of reports and studies, mainly from the humanitarian field, as well as numerous newspaper articles. Furthermore, I have conducted an interview with Keith Ursel, Senior Programme Advisor for the WFP in Somalia.<sup>13</sup>

This case study will analyse a greater time span than the previous one. The current state of violent anarchy in Somalia is essentially a continuation of the civil conflict, which erupted in the country after the overthrow of Siad Barre's government in 1991. In the 18 years since then, Somalia has effectively only known six months of peace (Gettleman, 2009c). In their 2008 report, Jaspars and Maxwell (2008: 8) divide the last nearly two decades of conflict in Somalia into three broad phases. The conflict started with the disintegration of the state and fighting between clan based militia (1991-2000). This was followed by the formation of new governments, undermined by armed opposition by clans, which felt marginalised within these new governments (2000-05). The third phase can be characterised as the rise of Islamists and the Ethiopian occupation (2005-2009). The last Ethiopian troops left the country in early 2009, having failed to stem the insurgency. Currently heavy fighting continues, mainly between government forces and gunmen loyal to the Muslim fundamentalist group al-Shabaab,<sup>14</sup> which means the Youth in Arabic.

However, during these 19 years, fighting never ceased, except for a mere six months following the Union of Islamic Courts' (UIC) takeover of Mogadishu in 2006 (Reuters Alertnet, 2009). Although my analysis will emphasise developments in recent years, many current events cannot be explained without reflecting on conflict dynamics, which go many years back. Furthermore, by starting my investigation in 1991, it allows me to analyse how attacks on food security as a tactic in this conflict have evolved with the ongoing disintegration of the Somali state. In the previous case study, I outlined how the level of organisation and strategy behind such attacks is a reflection of the level of control and organisation of the government. Whereas in Sudan, president al-Bashir is firmly in power, in Somalia, there is no such central control.

Since the period under investigation spans nearly two decades, it is not my intention to provide an up-to-date overview of conflict dynamics. I will, thus, analyse and present the outcomes of my research in a stylized and not always chronological manner. This enables me to evaluate my hypotheses more adequately. Furthermore, following Jeffrey Gettleman, Somalia might well be the most dangerous place on earth (Gettleman, 2009c). This obviously affects data gathering. It was not always possible to get the

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<sup>12</sup> The focus of this case study will exclude the autonomous regions of Puntland and Somaliland.

<sup>13</sup> For a list of the interviews please see Appendix I.

<sup>14</sup> The Islamist group al-Shabaab knows many different ways of spelling throughout the literature. For clarity, this is the one used here.

current or reliable statistics on all aspects of the topic at hand as “few foreign journalists travel into Somalia anymore. Kidnapping is the threat du jour... Nowadays, as soon as I land, I take 10 gunmen under my employ” (Gettleman, 2009c). The analysis provided in this case study thus serves as an indication of the dynamics and rationale behind attacks on food security, rather than a complete and infallible report. Similar to the previous case study, it is my aim to answer the “How and Why?” questions of attacks on food security, rather than to provide a chronological overview of conflict dynamics.

The format for this case study is identical to that of the previous Chapter. The first section will provide a background to the conflict in Somalia. This is followed by an analysis of the impact of the conflict on the food supply to non-combatants in the second section. The third section revolves around the “How” question of the use of food as a weapon, followed by a fourth section dealing with the “Why” question. Why are attacks on food security in Somalia an attractive option to combatants? The conclusion, finally, will summarise the most important findings from this case study.

## **4.2 Background to the conflict in Somalia**

Few countries in Africa are ethnically as homogeneous as Somalia. Jeffrey Gettleman, East Africa bureau chief for the *New York Times*, describes the country as a “political paradox -unified on the surface, poisonously divided beneath” (Gettleman, 2009c). It is one of two countries on the continent where nearly all of the inhabitants share the same culture, ethnicity, language, and the same religion (Dowden, 2009: 93). Yet, in Somalia, everything revolves around clans. “Somalis divide themselves into a dizzying number of clans, subclans, sub-subclans, and so on, with shifting allegiances and knotty backstories that have bedeviled (sic) outsiders for years” (Gettleman, 2009c). Richard Dowden concurs when he argues that “[f]or every generalization about Africa, Somalia is always the exception. And Somalis know it” (Dowden, 2009: 93).

Somalia gained independence in 1960, but it quickly became a piece on the Cold War chessboard, due to its strategic location in the Horn of Africa. First the Soviets and later the Americans pumped large amounts of weaponry into the poor, mostly illiterate and nomadic country (International Crisis Group, 2008a). Siad Barre ruled as a dictator from 1969 to 1991, but was at some point referred to as the “mayor of Mogadishu”, denoting his practically non-existent control over the country (Gettleman, 2009c; Meredith, 2005; Dowden, 2009). “Siad Barre deliberately and deftly used clan affiliation as the main instrument for his divide-and-rule tactics” (De Waal, 2002: 161) and when clan warlords finally ousted him in January 1991, the country quickly fell apart along clan lines.

In the first years after the demise of Barre, warlords turned on each other, using all the military-grade weaponry left over from the Cold War and turned the country into a battlefield where every port, airstrip, telephone pole and any other object of strategic or monetary value was fought over. As Gettleman (2009c) argues in *Foreign Policy*,

“The chaos gave rise to a new class of parasitic war profiteers—gunrunners, drug smugglers, importers of expired (and often sickening) baby formula—people with a vested interest in the chaos continuing. Somalia became the modern world’s closest approximation of Hobbes’s state of nature, where life was indeed nasty, brutish, and short.”

Between 1991 and 1993, large-scale fighting between rival clan based militia took place mainly in Mogadishu and in the riverine and inter-riverine areas of Middle and Lower Shebelle, Lower Juba and Bay Region, which were the most fertile and resource rich areas of the country (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2007: 8).<sup>15</sup> In 1992, the UN Security Council authorised a limited peacekeeping operation, the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I), mandated to provide security to the delivery of humanitarian aid. Yet, as violence continued and this operation could only use force in self-defence, the UN organised a military coalition to return peace and security to the country. This mission, which came to be known as Operation Restore Hope,<sup>16</sup> had the same aim as the previous mission, but a wider array of means to its disposal to accomplish this aim. Operation Restore Hope was followed by UNOSOM II, which focused on restoring peace and stability as well as national reconciliation in order to create a democratic Somali state. None of these missions, however, was successful in creating the much-needed secure environment for the distribution of humanitarian assistance. After the well-known “Black Hawk Down” incident in October 1993, which left 18 US marines dead, the United States, a major contributor to these operations, withdrew. UNOSOM II finally pulled back in March 1995 (International Crisis Group, 2008a).

By the late 1990s, parts of Somalia were occupied by different militia and some even declared autonomous states. At this time, nearly a decade into the conflict, fighting had become mainly “sub-clan affairs as a response to crimes, or clashes within clans over resources and political power” (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 8). Since 1995, the Western world significantly limited its involvement in Somalia. Yet, the Arab world spotted a chance and Arab organizations, many from Saudi Arabia and followers of the strict Wahhabi branch of Sunni Islam, stepped in. These organisations provided mosques, Koranic schools, and social service organisations, sparking a revival of Islamic sentiments (Gettleman, 2009a).

The turn of the millennium saw a peace conference in Djibouti, which led to the formation of the Transitional National Government (TNG). The Mogadishu-based Hawiye clan, however, dominated this government, and violence fuelled by those clan leaders unhappy with the Djibouti arrangement persisted until 2002, when 21 factions and the TNG signed a ceasefire agreement. In the subsequent two years, fighting continued as talks dragged on, until in August 2004, a 275-member parliament chosen by clans was sworn in in Nairobi, Kenya. This new government, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) suffered one fundamental flaw: both the president and the prime minister were close allies of Ethiopia and many clans, including the Hawiye, that were strong in the previous TNG now felt marginalised under the TFG (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 8-9; International Crisis Group, 2008a).

The early 2000s also marked a further increase in Islamist sentiments as Mogadishu’s clan elders set up a loose network of neighbourhood-based courts, which delivered a degree of much needed order. These courts, based on Islamic *sharia* law, used medieval but effective techniques. This network came to be known as the UIC (International Crisis Group, 2008a; Gettleman, 2009c).

Mogadishu’s business community, flourishing against the odds, spotted an opportunity amid the chaos. Gettleman recounts how in Mogadishu, there are warlords and moneylords.

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<sup>15</sup> For a map of Somalia see Map 5 at the end of this section.

<sup>16</sup> The actual name of this coalition was United Task Force (UNITAF).

“While the warlords were ripping the country apart, the moneylords, Somalia’s big-business owners, were holding the place together, delivering many of the same services -for a tidy profit, of course - that a government usually provides, such as healthcare, schools, power plants, and even privatized mail” (Gettleman, 2009c).

These moneylords recognised the UIC’s potential to restore a degree of order, at least in the capital. The UIC provided protection to the moneylords’ interests without the extortion and taxation that accompanied hired gunmen and militia. Thus, the moneylords began arming the Islamists (Gettleman, 2009c).

Le Sage and Najid (2002: 11-12) argue that “orthodox” explanations of the civil war in Somalia have overstated the importance of clan dynamics as well as environmental stress, and understate the economic stratification of Somali society and the role of self-interested elites. Existing socio-economic inequalities in society were accelerated by Siad Barre’s nationalisation of arable land, which was then again distributed to supporters of the regime, leaving landless Somalis as an underclass dependent on wage labour. Warlords, throughout the conflict, have used their militia to appropriate land for agricultural export production and livestock shipment. Power struggles between these elites have enflamed competition for resources. “In this struggle no groups or individuals can claim outright victory. In fact, many appear content with the functioning status quo of competition. Yet, large numbers of outright losers are produced” (Le Sage and Najid, 2002: 12).

Under UIC rule, Somalia saw the only six months of relative peace. Yet, neighbouring Christian Ethiopia, which feared that the UIC might back Eritrean war efforts against Ethiopia, saw the Islamist character of the regime as an existential threat. Furthermore, the United States wanted to act upon intelligence that a few al-Qaeda operatives were enjoying safe haven in southern Somalia. In December 2006, the Ethiopian government, with US backing, intelligence, and even some US Special Forces, invaded Somalia and routed the UIC within weeks. The TFG returned to Mogadishu (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 9; International Crisis Group, 2008c: 1-2).

There was widespread resistance against the TFG and within days, an insurgency campaign ground into gear. This led to large-scale displacement from the capital between February and May and again in October 2007. The TFG has failed to consolidate its authority. “Far from shoring up the government’s shaky legitimacy, it has deepened public disaffection, inflamed Somali nationalism and intensified the pace of religious extremism and radicalisation” (International Crisis Group, 2008c: 1). Furthermore, the Ethiopian troops overstayed their welcome (Gettleman, 2009a). The insurgency was, broadly speaking, a coalition of three distinct groups; clan militia, most notably Hawiye sub-clans; a small and ever-shrinking multi-clan group of former UIC combatants and finally the UIC splinter faction al-Shabaab, the most militant, well-organised, well-financed and active of the three (International Crisis Group, 2008c: 11).

In February 2007, the UN Security Council authorised a six-month African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission (AMISOM). The mandate has been extended ever since, with the most recent extension, for seven months, approved on 15 June 2009. However, both the UIC and al-Shabaab announced they considered the AU soldiers enemies (Mohamed, 2009).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For example early October 2009, when Somalia’s two main rebel groups, al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam agreed a truce, they announced they would now cooperate to fight both the government and the AU peacekeepers (Mohamed, 2009).

Early 2008, security worsened dramatically in Somalia. The Islamist insurgents, led by al-Shabaab had spread to the Lower Shebelle, Hiran, Bay, Bakool and Juba regions. This was accompanied by retaliatory attacks by Ethiopian forces and renewed US airstrikes on Islamist bases. In April, key districts fell to insurgents and Mogadishu witnessed some of the heaviest fighting in a decade (International Crisis Group, 2008a).

In January 2009, it became apparent that the Ethiopian intervention had failed and the Ethiopian troops retreated, setting Somalia back to where it had been in 2006, with 17,000 people killed in the process. President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, who was an ally of Ethiopia and an enemy of the Islamists, stepped down (BBC News, 2009a). Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmad, elected by parliament residing in Djibouti in order to avoid the violence back home, replaced Ahmed. Sheikh Sharif enjoys widespread grass-roots support inside Somalia and gets extensive help from outside nations, who are counting on Sheikh Sharif to tackle piracy and the spread of militant Islam (Gettleman, 2009a)

Renewed American engagement with the Somali government translated itself in major weapons shipments in order to keep Sheikh Sharif's government alive. However, the Somali armed forces are "like sieves", with many commanders still maintaining ties to al-Shabaab. Several government officials have conceded that a large share of the American weapons have slipped into rebel hands (McCrummen, 2009). This is hardly surprising, since Sheikh Sharif's regime effectively only controls a few blocks in Mogadishu and is dependent on the approximately 5,000 AU troops in the country for protection.

"[I]f those troops were not guarding the port, airport and the hilltop presidential palace called Villa Somalia, many Somalis believe Sheikh Sharif's government would quickly fall. Insurgents have been attacking the peacekeepers relentlessly, often with suicide bombs" (Gettleman, 2009a).

Currently, the situation in Somalia seems to have changed little, with massive humanitarian consequences. A majority of the population is currently in need of humanitarian assistance and the internationally recognised, but practically powerless, government is in no position to alleviate even slightly the plight of the local population. Somalia has become the war that nobody seems to be able to win. None of the factions seems powerful or popular enough to overthrow the others and some in Somali society seem to fare well by the state of chaos that by now has spanned a generation. Gettleman (2009c) argues that Somalia does not even qualify for the concept of "failed state" anymore:

"To call it even a failed state was generous. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a failed state. So is Zimbabwe. But those places at least have national armies and national bureaucracies, however corrupt. Since 1991, Somalia has not been a state so much as a lawless, ungoverned space on the map between its neighbors and the sea. Since 1991, life in Somalia resembles a scene from a Boris Pasternak movie, with large masses of people being caught between different armed groups, militia and bandits, constantly being pushed back and forth."



**Map 5: Somalia** (International Crisis Group, 2008c: 32).

### 4.3 The nature of food supply to non-combatants in Somalia

#### 4.3.1 Introduction

The previous case study confirmed that food insecurity is the result of both limited availability of food combined with imperfect access to food. I will now assess whether this observation also holds true in the case of Somalia. The situation in this country is fundamentally different from Sudan in general or Darfur in particular in the sense that Somalia does not have a government with even the slightest ability to exercise systematic control over Food Aid deliveries, like the government of Sudan. Virtually the whole of Somalia is in desperate need of Food Aid, with little surplus being produced. Furthermore, due to conditions of drought and the absence of the rains in the Horn of Africa, Somalia’s food insecurity is forecast to take a devastating turn for the worse in short term.

In this section, I will provide an analysis of food production, procurement and livelihoods and how these were affected by the current conflict. I will profile the potential livelihoods Somalis can have in the

absence of conflict. This draws on data pertaining to the location, climate, and agricultural potential of the country, as well as the traditional livelihoods of the population and how these livelihoods operate under periods of relative calm. This is followed by an analysis of how the conflict affected this potential and these livelihoods. The third section will deal with the population's dependence on Food Aid and how this dependency is affected by the conflict. These three sections will be followed by a theoretical analysis drawing on the findings of Chapter Two.

### **4.3.2 Livelihood potential in Somalia**

Somalia is located in the Horn of Africa and shares its borders with Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. It has a wide range of climates. The north is very dry, yet allows for pastoralism and oasis agriculture. The south provides many possibilities for irrigated agriculture; along rivers, in the Bay and Bakool regions, and even in some central regions. Before the conflict, these areas were characterised by huge areas of rice fields, banana trees and sugar cane. The central regions beside rivers, where irrigation systems have broken down, allow for agricultural activities during the two rainy seasons, the *Gu*, which ideally lasts from April to June and the *Deyr*, from October to late November or early December (ICRC, 2009).

Due to fluctuating climatic conditions, on average, one in every five harvests is a partial failure with one in every ten a complete failure. Most parts of the country are structurally food insecure, which has been aggravated by the last twenty years of conflict. Furthermore, food insecurity itself also sparked conflict as it made the struggle for limited resources more intense (Mattinen and Ogden, 2006: 298-99; Le Sage and Majid, 2002: 19). An insightful Somali proverb therefore holds that “when food is not enough, there will be a lot of quarrels” (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 1).

Just 13 percent of the land is potentially arable, with another 45 percent potentially suitable for pastoralism. The two permanent rivers in the country, the Juba and the Shebelle, allow for riverine agriculture, using mainly flood-recession and pump-irrigation farming techniques. This production takes place on commercial irrigated farms, generally owned by business groups in Mogadishu, as well as on smaller rain-fed plots (Mattinen and Ogden, 2006: 298-99; Le Sage and Majid, 2002: 19).

In Somalia, several factors combine to cause vulnerability to food insecurity. Conflict and displacement are a critical component. Clan affiliation has proved crucial in obtaining access to limited resources. Furthermore, droughts, floods, and economic shocks form a structural component of food insecurity in the country, which create situations of acute food insecurity and humanitarian crises for large numbers of people (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 10 and 12).<sup>18</sup> In their study on vulnerability in Somalia, Le Sage and Najid (2002: 15) observed that different groups in Somalia survive, prosper and suffer in different ways, since they have different mechanisms for adapting to physical and social environmental change. They identified over 20 different “food economy groups”. Those important for food security, regarding food production and procurement can be grouped into three broad categories.

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<sup>18</sup> As an illustration, in the last fifteen years, droughts occurred in 1995/1996, floods in 1997, followed by frequent drought between 1999 and 2002 and again in 2005/2006 and 2007 (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2006: 12). Currently, according to UN official Mark Bowden, Somalia faces the worst drought in twenty years (Nyakairu, 2009a). Conditions of drought have continued for the last five years in Somalia (Nyakairu, 2009b and FSNAU, 2009c: 8).

The first category concerns the pastoralist population. Pastoralism and trade of livestock remain the principal livelihood for the majority of Somalis and accounts for approximately 80 percent of export earnings per annum. Livestock consists primarily of camels, cattle, goats, and sheep and serves different purposes. It provides milk and meat for domestic consumption, as well as hides and skins for export (Nyakairu, 2009a).

Generally, pastoralists derive the majority of their food needs from the purchase of cereals, sugar, and oil. Milk and milk products comprise a significant additional food source. The income needed to obtain these food items is mainly derived from the sale of livestock and milk and milk products mentioned above (Le Sage and Majid, 2002: 16; Montani and Majid, 2002: 3). Le Sage and Majid (2002: 16-17) note a strong stratification in the wealth of different pastoralist groups. Poorer groups, whose herds are of smaller size, supplement their food supply by activities such as petty trade, gathering of wild foods and firewood and casual labour. Furthermore, gifts to the poor from within the clan or community, such as lactating livestock, food and cash, are also common.

In general, pastoralists have been considered the least vulnerable to food insecurity. This can be attributed to both political and natural circumstances. Pastoralist clans have historically formed a majority in Somalia and this is mirrored in their politico-military power. Furthermore, due to the nature of their source of livelihood, which is highly mobile, they have been able to avoid the worst effects of both natural adversity and conflict. However, these positive trends have been partially interrupted by continuing drought conditions, which have severely limited access to watering holes for animals, as well as two bans in recent years on livestock imports from Somalia in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, due to Rift Valley Fever (Le Sage and Majid, 2002: 16-17; FSNAU, 2009b).

The second group comprises agro-pastoralists. The majority of the agro-pastoralist population lives along or between the Juba and Shebelle river valleys. Smaller groups are found in scattered pockets of the north-eastern regions. These regions are the most fertile part of the country, and the peoples of the inter-riverine regions were not accustomed to famine prior to 1991. De Waal quotes one of the proverbs of these peoples, which holds that “the drought that hits the south is not serious, but that of the north is terrible (De Waal, 2002: 162). Cattle are the dominant livestock species and sorghum the primary cultivated crop. Typically, these groups derive the majority of their food needs from their own production, supplemented by some purchase. They make some money from the sale of livestock and crops. For poorer groups, this income is supplemented by different sources such as petty trade, casual labour and collection of wild foods and firewood (Le Sage and Majid, 2002: 18; Montani and Majid, 2002: 4)

Since 1991, agro-pastoral clans are considered the most food-insecure in Somalia, for reasons that will be explained in more depth in the following subsection. Politically and militarily, they have been marginalised and they have been the greatest victims of violence after 1991. Poor rains over the last years have resulted in poor harvests. This in turn has led to significant asset losses, both in terms of food and livestock, and displacement has created large-scale food deficits (Le Sage and Majid, 2002: 18; Montani and Majid, 2002: 4).

The third group consists of the riverine populations of the coastal end of the Juba and Shebelle rivers. This group generally has very small herds of livestock or no livestock at all. These farmers derive most of their income out of irrigated food production, both subsistence as well as cash crop. Poorer groups supplement their income with casual labour, mainly on other farms, as well as with petty trading and the collection of firewood and wild foods. Dominant pastoralist clans consider riverine farmers a lower caste and they were politically marginalised. Since 1991, these riverine communities have been vulnerable to discrimination by armed pastoralist militia and were forced off their land when pastoralist militia created mutually beneficial alliances with their neighbours. Moreover, natural adversity has also taken its toll on these communities, reinforced by the continuing disintegration of irrigation infrastructure that should safeguard against disasters (Montani and Majid, 2002: 6, Le Sage and Majid, 2002: 19-20).

Finally, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit for Somalia (FSNAU), which has been closely monitoring food security in Somalia for the last fifteen years, stresses the importance of markets for food procurement in Somalia. "Markets in Somalia play a critical role in the economy affecting both the food and livelihood security of the population" (FSNAU, 2009b). These markets perform an important role regarding both domestic and import/export trade. Due to Somalia's strong pastoralist tradition, the export market for live animals is the single largest in the world. All three livelihood groups described above rely on markets to varying degrees to supplement both their income and their food supply (FSNAU, 2009b).<sup>19</sup>

#### **4.3.3 The effect of conflict on the food-supply to non-combatants**

Somalia has been in conflict for a generation, yet the country is also prone to natural adversity. As a result, it is difficult to assess exactly what the impact of conflict has been on the food-supply to non-combatants, controlling for other factors. Jaspars and Maxwell (2008: 13) outline how conflict has increased vulnerability to drought and floods in a number of ways. First, due to loss of assets, limited infrastructure and in the absence of even the most basic services, livelihood opportunities are severely restricted. Moreover, intermittent conflict has led to large-scale displacement or prevented people in other ways from cultivating their land. With regard to the riverine communities, they are more vulnerable to flooding as essential irrigation systems have broken down in the absence of an effective government. Due to the aforementioned appropriation of their land by powerful pastoralist militia, farmers were pushed closer to the sea.

However, the conflict has also affected food security in ways that are more direct. With regard to the first famine that struck after the demise of the state, in 1991-92, Menkhaus noted that "famine had its origins in the collapse of the state and the general disintegration of law and order that contributed to an economy of sustained plunder" (1994: 148).

Political marginalisation is a fundamental indicator in explaining vulnerability. De Waal notes that the 1991-92 famine was highly selective, striking primarily two groups, the inhabitants of the riverine areas

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<sup>19</sup> Pastoralists rely for 40 to 80 percent of their cash income on the sale of livestock and livestock products and cover between 30 to 70 percent of their food needs through cereal purchases. Agro-pastoralists and riverine agriculturalists alike depend on markets for the sale of their produce, as well as for employment opportunities (FSNAU, 2009b).

and IDPs. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) found near-normal levels of nutrition among pastoralists and urban residents, but alarming rates of malnutrition amongst agriculturalists in the Juba and Shebelle river valleys, with those displaced showing the highest rates of under-nutrition. “The famine was the legacy of long-standing power relations, not poverty as such” (De Waal, 2002: 162). In the 1980s, agriculture boomed in these regions, yet this natural wealth did little to ensure prosperity of the farmers.

Jaspars and Maxwell (2008: 10) also note how especially minority groups<sup>20</sup> living in the Juba, Shebelle, Bay and Bakool regions have suffered the consequences of the conflict on their food security. Before 1991, they were the most politically marginalised; however, they also inhabited some of the most fertile agricultural land. Yet, these minority groups had lower social and political status than the main Somali pastoral clans. As a result, they have been systematically dispossessed from their land. “Land has been at the centre of these minorities’ problems” (De Waal, 2002: 163).

First, the Italian colonisers confiscated large tracts of riverine farmland for banana plantations. After independence, a new class of urban Somali entrepreneurs used their government connections to claim irrigable nationalised land, if necessary by force. In the Lower Shebelle region, for example, this new set of landlords claimed much of the arable land. The largest surge in this systematic dispossession of farmland took place in the 1980s. Thousands of civil servants, politicians, merchants and army officers seized large tracts of riverine farmland, using provisions from the 1975 Land Reform Act. The small local landholders, unable to navigate the bureaucracy, lost control of the land their families have been cultivating for generations. In the wake of this wave of dispossession, a new Somali elite of capitalist landowners was established, matched by an indigenous class of subsistence farmers and day labourers (Worldbank, 2005: 29; De Waal, 2002: 162-163; Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 10).

The main livestock losses in general occurred during the 1990s. These livestock losses, combined with displacement have resulted in major livelihood changes. Former pastoralists now derive their main source of income from agro-pastoralism, farming or wage labour. However, this increased reliance on agriculture has not necessarily stabilised livelihoods. Migration and sustainable destocking traditionally served as a buffer against crop failure. However, by 2004, one-third of livestock owners had already sold more animals than required to maintain the herd size. More than 50 percent of the yields since the early 1990s have been below pre-war averages (FSNAU, 2009b).

Conditions of food insecurity abate significantly depending on for example rainfall. However, positive developments in environmental and security conditions in the last eighteen years do not enable the most destitute populations to improve their plight, due to the aforementioned almost total lack of ownership of assets, in terms of land, livestock, cash and even labour. Gains made in times of relative

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<sup>20</sup> Minority groups in Somalia are estimated to present roughly 20 percent of the population and include Sab Somali (Digil and Rahanwein clans), indigenous Cushitic people (like the Shebelle and Gabwing), as well as Bantu peoples (who are not part of the clan system). Furthermore, Somali society knows a variety of marginalised groups, which are characterised by the stigma of their occupation relating to ritual “uncleanliness”. The Eyle people, for example have traditionally been hunters and the Tumul blacksmiths. None of these groups have been well represented politically (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 10). De Waal notes that if the Sab clans are considered second-class citizens, the Bantu are third-class (De Waal, 2002: 162).

affluence often go towards the repayment of debt or evaporate in inevitable times of drought or flood (Le Sage and Majid, 2002: 11).

An internal Action Contre le Faim (ACF) analysis, quoted by Mattinen and Ogden (2006: 299-300) found that food insecurity and famine for the aforementioned marginalised groups in Somalia are indeed more a matter of access than of limited availability. “[C]ommercial networks were functional, there was no supply dilemma, and people always had an operational market within their reach” (Mattinen and Ogden, 2006: 300). Lack of purchasing power is a key problem in this context. Since the start of the conflict, the quality of the diet of marginalised groups had deteriorated and a majority of households had resorted to “environmentally or socio-economically erosive coping mechanisms, such as over-reliance on credit, labour migration and charcoal burning” (Mattinen and Ogden, 2006: 300).

Living conditions have worsened, with every conflict year almost without exception being worse than the last, and millions now seem to be on the brink of mass starvation (International Crisis Group, 2008c: 1). FSNAU’s latest Food Security and Nutrition Special Brief of early September 2009 confirmed this observation in detail. It argues in bold terms that “Somalia faces its worse Humanitarian Crisis in eighteen years, with half of the population or an estimated 3.64 million people in need of emergency livelihood and life saving assistance at least until December 2009” (FSNAU, 2009c: 1). Three-quarters of those in need are concentrated in the south and central parts of Somalia. This is also the area where the heaviest fighting is taking place, severely restricting access in terms of relief (FSNAU, 2009c: 1).<sup>21</sup>

Even when harvests are normal or above normal, as was the case with this year’s *Gu* harvest, the benefits of this in terms of both increased supplies as well as lower prices, cannot be passed on to drought affected regions.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the conflict has created new and increased IDP populations in the South, which consume much of the surplus that would normally flow north. The conflict also impacts on the accessibility of the main road linking the south and central regions, which affects trade from the south to the rest of the country (FSNAU, 2009c: 1; UN, 2009: 2).

This humanitarian crisis is reflected in increased rates of malnutrition.<sup>23</sup> Before 1991, malnutrition rates in Somalia showed seasonal variations. These variations have disappeared since the start of the conflict, presumably due to limited logistical opportunities to transport seasonal surpluses across the country. Throughout the conflict, the agro-pastoralist populations of the Bay and Bakool region and the

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<sup>21</sup> Somalia faces some of the highest rates of “mortality, morbidity and malnutrition” (Le Sage and Majid, 2002: 10), mirrored in the country’s UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.284. This index was derived in 2001, the latest UNDP report on the country. Compared to the latest world ranking this HDI would make Somalia the least developed country in the world (UNDP, 2001: 44).

<sup>22</sup> Due to the severe drought, this year the epicenter of the humanitarian crisis is the regions of Bakool, Hiraan, Galgaduud, Mudug, Nugaal, Sool, Snaag and Togdheer (UN, 2009: 2). In these regions, the depth of the crisis is severe. Up to 65 percent of the total population is affected by the crisis, of which 73 percent are classified to be in Humanitarian Emergency. In these regions, the nutrition situation is alarming. Most pastoralists and agro-pastoralists are classified as “Critical”. In the Bakool region, where the situation is even worse, most pastoralists are classified as “Very Critical”. “The contributing factors are the acute food insecurity situation, ongoing displacement, and high morbidity burden coupled with a complete lack of access to basic services for the affected populations” (FSNAU, 2009c: 1).

<sup>23</sup> For an overview of the current nutrition situation, see Map 6 at the end of this subsection.

riverine population along the Juba and Shebelle rivers, as well as IDPs, have had the highest prevalence of acute malnutrition (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 13-14).<sup>24</sup>

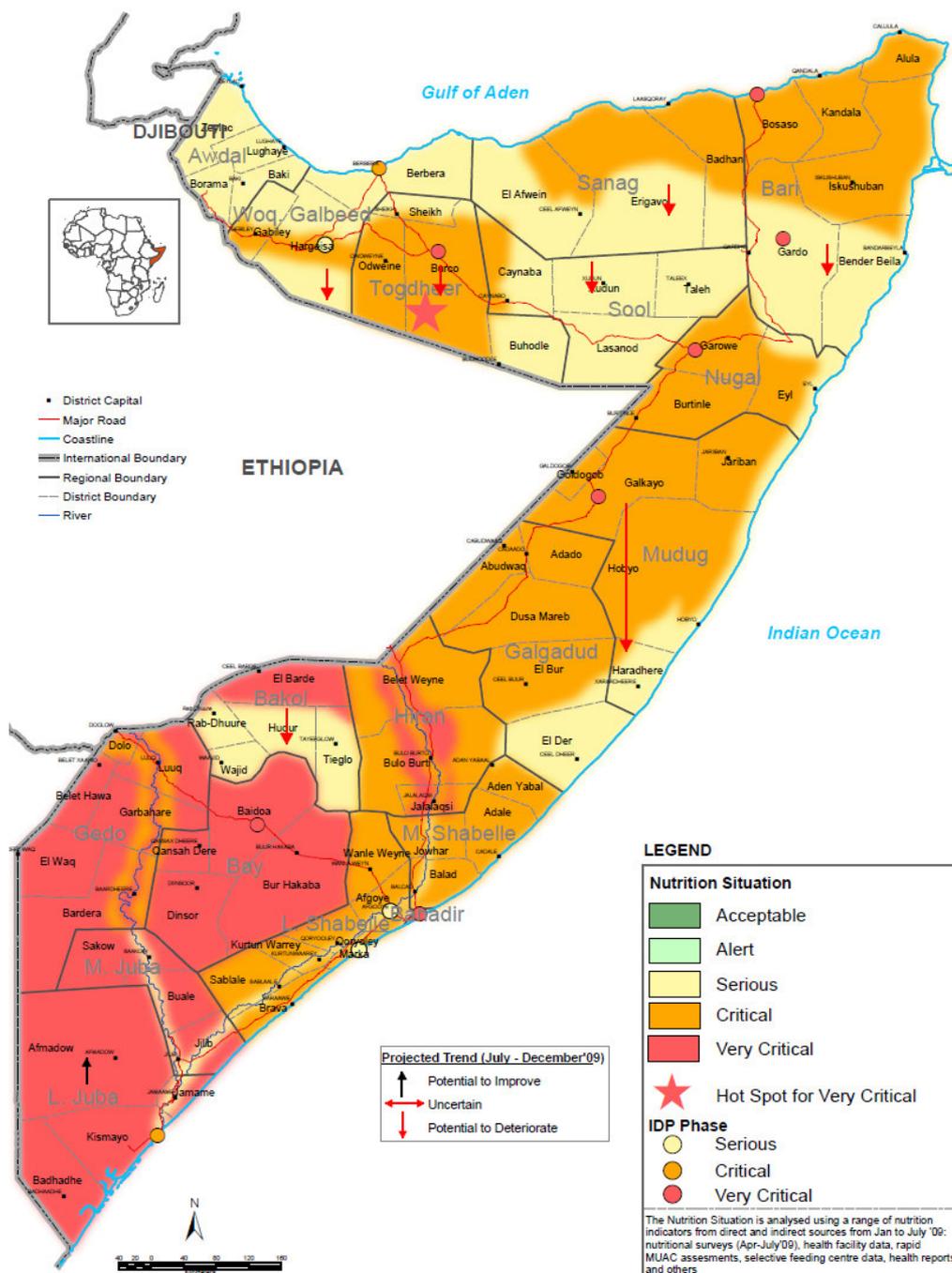
Food insecurity as a result of conflict is further compounded by hyperinflation. “Hyperinflation has seen the cost of some food staples triple in just six months during 2008” (Human Rights Watch, 2008: 20). International Crisis Group reports how prices for essential food commodities have increased between 110 and 375 percent since the beginning of 2008. Although to some extent this is a worldwide phenomenon, in Somalia it seems to hit even harder due to limited coping mechanisms. Somali traders face increasing difficulties in buying rice from traditional suppliers like India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Vietnam. Billions of counterfeit Somali banknotes, printed in the autonomous Puntland region, as well as uncontrolled printing of authentic shillings, have created hyperinflation and most traders are now unwilling to accept the Somali shilling. Since January 2007, the shilling depreciated over 165 percent. Hyperinflation has also impacted severely on fuel prices and this, combined with sprawling checkpoints, has pushed prices for staple foods, especially on more remote markets, beyond the reach of the poor, resulting in a dramatic increase in malnutrition (International Crisis Group, 2008c: 18; FSNAU, 2009b).

Remarkable in this respect are the resilience of both markets and the role of Somali business elites in providing some stability. Even under the present circumstances, both markets and trade have proven dynamic (FSNAU, 2009b). Although in the case of Darfur, the conflict had eroded trust levels between traders, in the clan system of Somalia, which is a high trust society, these networks continue to function (Dowden, 2009: 261). “Nothing is written down, everything is on trust. Somalia –within the clans- is a very high trust society. Cheat and you die. It works well” (Dowden, 2009: 115).

Keith Ursel argues that although conflict has affected agriculture as fewer crops are grown, Somali traders still manage to purchase large amounts of food on the international market (Ursel, 2009). Somali business elites have played a leading role in developing the country’s economy, by investing in telecommunications, food processing and remittance transfer systems (Mattinen and Ogden, 2006: 299; Dowden, 2009: 115). Especially this remittance transfer system proved crucial in alleviating the plight of Somalis with relatives abroad. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in Somalia. The abovementioned figure of more than 3.6 million people in need of assistance consists of an estimated 1.55 million IDPs, displaced by the continuous fighting, 1.4 million rural people affected by severe drought, as well as 655,000 urban poor. Approximately 75 percent of the population in need is concentrated in the South and South-Central parts of the country (UN, 2009: 1).

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<sup>24</sup> Since January 2009, malnutrition levels in several parts of Somalia have increased. According to the most recent statistics, one in five children in Somalia can be considered malnourished, while one in 20 are severely malnourished and are at an increased risk of death if they do not receive specialist care (UN, 2009: 2; FSNAU, 2009b; FSNAU, 2009c: 1).



**Map 6: Estimated nutrition situation Somalia July 2009 (FSNAU, 2009a).**

#### 4.3.4 The role and influence of Food Aid

The WFP has been operating in Somalia since the start of the conflict and from 1999 to 2009 it operated with a Protracted Relief and Rehabilitation Operation (PRRO) that provided about 90,000 metric tons of Food Aid per annum. The majority of this Food Aid found its way to the South-Central part of the country, where the heaviest fighting was taking place. Within this regional distribution, the greater part of the deliveries goes to IDPs and the food-insecure rural population. However, with continuous fighting taking place in the cities, most notably Mogadishu, the urban populations now also receive food rations (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 6).

The dramatic increase in the number of people in need of assistance is attributed to a growing urban food security crisis, affecting more than 705,000 urban poor, and a deepening rural crisis reflected by a 64 percent increase in the rural population in crisis, from 850,000 earlier this year to more than 1,395,000 currently. In addition, the number of people displaced by conflict is continuing to increase and is now estimated at 870,000 (FSNAU, 2009b).

Currently, in Somalia, the WFP works under the Emergency Operation (EMOP) *Food Aid for Emergency Relief and Protection of Livelihoods*. This Operation replaced the previous PRRO. The current EMOP aims to provide Food Aid to 3.5 million Somalis, yet is faced a shortfall of nearly 60 percent of its budget. In Mogadishu, the WFP prefers so-called wet feedings, which means the distribution of prepared food instead of dry rations, since the latter is more prone to raiding and looting (World Food Programme, 2009d: 27; De Waal, 2002: 169).

#### **4.3.5 Theoretical implications**

In line with the previous case study, Sen's observation that food security is an issue of limited access *in conjunction with* limited availability of food also holds true in the case of Somalia, especially regarding the early years of the conflict. In Somalia, agro-pastoralist, agriculturalist clans and especially Bantu peoples have been marginalised economically and politically. As outlined above, the inter-riverine and riverine areas of Somalia, the most fertile parts of the country, have known drought, but never like in the North. Since 1991, it is precisely these fertile regions, which have suffered most from malnutrition, a reflection of their political marginalisation. Furthermore, alternative coping strategies have allowed these farming communities to survive times of natural adversity. However, since the 1980s, business elites in Mogadishu have exploited these clans and deprived them of their land. Thereafter, they turned their farms into commercial plantations mainly for export purposes. The inter-riverine and riverine communities became wage labourers and lost the coping mechanisms, which sustained them in the past.

The issue of inflation and skyrocketing food prices further confirms Sen's observation. Somali businessmen still manage to buy significant quantities of food on the world market. Yet, this food is beyond the reach of many in need due to the monumental depreciation of the Somali shilling, reflected in appalling numbers of malnourished children.

Green's argument that without war, drought in Africa seldom resulted in massive loss of life is not entirely true in Somalia. Harvests in Somalia are prone to failure. The country is subject to natural disasters and has known devastating famines in the past. However, traditional coping mechanisms are undermined by the current conflict. Furthermore, malnutrition levels, which used to vary according to season in Somalia, are now not only higher than before the conflict but also seem to remain stable throughout the year. This implies that surplus producing areas have lost their connection to deficit areas. Transportation has become so insecure and costly that food is being moved to a lesser extent throughout the country and surpluses are now often consumed by IDPs residing in these areas.

The dynamics described by Keen (1994: 112) of how conflict alters livelihoods have been observed in Somalia but by no means to the extent witnessed in Darfur. Scorched-earth tactics like

employed on a large scale in Darfur, were only sporadic in Somalia and although large IDP movements were created, many of these people were able to return to their original livelihoods in times of relative calm. Furthermore, conflict has become such a part of Somali reality that a new *modus operandi* has developed that allows the local population to retain some level of normalcy in the presence of conflict.

Nevertheless, conflict changed the livelihoods of all three groups mentioned above. Most pastoralists have seen a gradual shift in herd composition (from camels to cattle) in response to a combination of asset losses, insecurity and market incentives. However, this has left them more vulnerable to natural adversity, as camels are better able to survive drought than cattle. Grazing mobility has also been restricted due to conflict and insecurity. Agro-pastoralists have also experienced asset losses as well as displacement. Their political and economic marginalisation has denied them unhindered access to markets. They have to supplement their income by working on other fields, leaving little time to manage their own and so invest in future food security. Riverine farmers have suffered both from a continuing disintegration of the state of infrastructure as well as from the effects of their political and economic marginalisation. The latter has left them vulnerable to attacks by well-equipped pastoralist militia and has pushed them to areas even more prone to flooding.

#### **4.4 The use of food as a weapon**

##### **4.4.1 Introduction**

In the previous section, I outlined how conflict directly and indirectly undermined traditional livelihood systems. In this section, I will provide an overview of the tactics deliberately used to create food insecurity in terms of food production and food procurement. I will use the distinction between acts of omission, acts of commission and acts of provision, made by Macrae and Zwi. This overview will be followed by an analysis of how Food Aid has affected the conflict dynamics in Somalia. I will conclude this section with an overview of the theoretical implications of this case study in the light of Chapter Two. It has to be noted at this stage that the information needed to answer these questions is not as complete as that used in the previous case study, mainly due to security constraints. Both the WFP and many news agencies have their head office in the Kenyan capital Nairobi and only occasionally travel into the country, creating gaps in the availability and accuracy of the data.

##### **4.4.2 Acts of omission**

For the purpose of this section, acts of omission are defined as instances where “governments fail to monitor adequately and plan for food security in all sections of a country; it identifies the failure of governments to manage food reserves and to instigate and facilitate appropriate emergency measures” (Macrae and Zwi 1992: 301).

Defining acts of omission in Somalia is a difficult matter. One could either define the entire eighteen years of the conflict as one major act of omission. When strictly interpreting the definition provided by Macrae and Zwi above, the subsequent governments of Somalia have certainly failed to manage food reserves and abstained from instigating and facilitating appropriate emergency measures.

However, such an interpretation does little for our analysis. I feel that the aforementioned definition should be interpreted keeping in mind the *capacities* and *intentions* of the government.

Since the start of the conflict in 1991, the Somali government has hardly ever exercised more effective control than within the city of Mogadishu. The subsequent governments in Somalia only nominally held power and have always depended on outside forces to retain it. Under such circumstances, it would be unfair to expect that these governments, by any means, would be capable to plan for food security. A comparison with the previous case study serves to clarify this point. The GoS deliberately sold off large food supplies to other countries, while Darfur was starving, and consciously kept infrastructure and basic services in the region underdeveloped. Such an intentional strategy on the part of the Somali government would be unthinkable considering the practically non-existent control it has exercised the past two decades.

When thinking about acts of omission, only one policy comes to mind that could qualify as such an act. However, the act itself took place under the regime of Siad Barre. The governments after 1991 have not been willing or powerful enough to tackle these problems. This situation concerns the systemic marginalisation of the (inter-)riverine communities (De Waal, 2002: 163). The expropriation of their land undermined food security not only in these regions, but also in the country as a whole. Mogadishu-based elites turned the most fertile land into commercial export-driven plantations, and this land lost its surplus producing potential for the domestic market.

#### **4.4.3 Acts of commission**

Acts of commission refer to attacks on food production and procurement (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 303; Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 13-19). These acts relate to actions, which effectively undermine agricultural production and obstruct coping strategies, including attacks on Food Aid deliveries, markets, as well as forced population relocation. Contrary to the above-mentioned acts of omission, acts of commission do not require a government in effective control, or any kind of broader strategy, although we saw in the previous case study that acts of commission can definitely serve to implement such a broader strategy. Acts of commission have been much more common in Somalia and it would be impossible and go beyond the scope of this research to provide a complete overview of such acts here.

Attacks on food production were especially violent in the early days of the conflict. Siad Barre undertook a scorched-earth campaign to prevent pursuit as he fled from the capital. This led to the immediate displacement of farmers from their land and drastically undercut food production in the fertile areas of the Juba and Shebelle valleys. Eyewitness reports of the warfare in southern Somalia following Barre's flight describe "the massive and brutal victimization of the Jubba (sic) valley farmers. They were among the earliest victims of warfare, looting and famine" (Besteman, 1999: 18). For several years after 1991, the farmers of these regions were "repeatedly victimized by the scorched-earth tactics of the ... militia as their forces looted, livestock, seeds, tools, and grain, destroyed water sources, raped the women and killed the men" (Besteman, 1999: 18). Shields (1993: 39) confirms that "[w]ith each advance or retreat, marauding armies and their thousands of armed camp followers looted and pillaged without

restraint... Destruction was systematic, with wells, ponds grain stores, seeds and livestock consumed, carried off, killed, or destroyed”.

As expected, the politically and economically marginalised communities described above suffered most from these acts of commission. ““Bantu” refugees... again became targets, as warlords and their militia looted their food relief, just as they had earlier looted their homes, their underground silos, their maturing crops, and their villages” (Besteman, 1999: 19). Jaspars and Maxwell confirm the fact that minority groups in Somalia suffered disproportionately from the violence, and consequently formed the majority of the displaced and the famine victims (2008: 11).

“The principal victims of this violence were weak agricultural communities and coastal minority groups caught in the middle of the fighting. Looted of all their belongings, they faced a massive famine in late 1991 and early 1992, prompting large international relief operations” (World Bank, 2005: 11).

Pillaging, looting and scorched-earth tactics were most common during the first decade of the conflict. A 2005 Worldbank report argues that the main reason why these activities have become less frequent is simply that there is little left to loot that is not already owned by those with political or economic power. “Pillaging and looting are less common as well, mainly because most assets are in the hands of businessmen with paid security forces protecting them” (Worldbank, 2005: 12-13). The main livestock losses also occurred during the 1990s, when clan disputes involved livestock raiding and looting, as well as major population displacement (Mattinen and Ogden, 2006: 314)

Unfortunately, looting during Food Aid deliveries is still very common. Human Rights Watch (HRW) describes how Food Aid agencies need to rely on gatekeepers, who can help carry out distribution and guarantee some degree of safety. Yet, the NGOs are forced to draw these gatekeepers from local militia. HRW’s 2008 report on Somalia describes the case of a Food Aid distribution in an IDP camp along the Afgooye road, where a militiaman guarding food distribution killed a pregnant woman after an intense argument. He refused her access because she was carrying two ration cards. In fact, the other card belonged to her friend, who was guarding both their *qat* stalls (Human Rights Watch, 2008: 80-81). Jaspars and Maxwell (2008: 25, 33-34) describe similar malpractice during relief distributions. In some IDP camps, food rations are not sufficient to last a whole month and IDPs need to leave the camps to either find work in Mogadishu, to join food kitchens, or to collect grass or firewood for sale. “People were beaten, or robbed when collecting grass, but had to continue to do this because they had no alternative way of getting food or income” (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 39).

De Waal notes, however, how large-scale looting of Food Aid had some positive side effects, as it led to a sharp drop in food prices for many commodities on the local market. In January 1992, “when 8,000 tonnes of wheatflour was looted from a CARE warehouse in Mogadishu port, the price of food dropped sharply and tension in the city was appreciably if briefly eased” (De Waal, 2002: 170).

Besides direct acts like looting, raiding and scorched-earth tactics, more indirect acts of commission are also encountered. Siege warfare features prominently here. For example in May of 2009, al-Shabaab and its allies all but seized Mogadishu and sealed the escape routes out of the city (Gittleman,

2009c). Furthermore, massive population displacement during the entire conflict has severely affected food security, production and procurement.

A prominent act of commission concerns attacks on Bakaaraha market.<sup>25</sup> This is an open market in the heart of Mogadishu and the largest in the country. During the Battle of Mogadishu in 1993, the market was the site of the Black Hawk Down incident. This lively market forms the hub of the Hawiye clan's economic power (International Crisis Group, 2008c: 4). Al-Shabaab currently imposes taxation on the market to fund its cause. In September 2009, al-Shabaab stormed the market and demanded the traders to join their fight or quit their stalls (Nyakairu, 2009b).

Furthermore, on numerous occasions the market came under fire from TFG rocket propelled grenades (RPG). This violence was often said to be ordered by the security forces to coincide with negotiations with Hawiye clan elders, in order to frustrate the outcome (International Crisis Group, 2008c: 6) "Hawiye clan elders saw recurrent attacks on the Bakaaraha market, the city's biggest shopping district, as meant to punish them economically" (International Crisis Group, 2008c: 16). Massive looting always followed TFG attacks on the market. The market is sometimes cordoned off for weeks, causing major difficulties for consumers and traders alike (International Crisis Group, 2008c: 17; HRW, 2007: 70).

#### **4.4.4 Acts of provision: attacks on Food Aid**

This final category of attacks on food security consists of acts of provision, which concern a differential supply of food. This often involves control over and diversion of Food Aid. "Food may be selectively provided to government supporters, to those from whom support is sought, or to lure sections of the populations to areas controlled by the military" (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 19).

Attacks on Food Aid seem to have replaced attacks on domestic food production as a method of choice in the last decade of the conflict. This is a logical trend since attacks on food production, combined with deteriorating infrastructure, insecurity, population displacement and drought have limited local food production and increased the demand for and volume of relief distributions.

Consequently, humanitarian access, mainly to South-Central Somalia, has been steadily worsening during the last ten years.<sup>26</sup> These access problems have resulted mainly from chronic insecurity. Menkhaus (2007b: 39) lists a number of these security problems, which include wholesale looting of aid warehouses or convoys, security problems at airstrips and threats against aid agencies. The latter are an expression of grievances over contracts going to members of opposing clans or dissatisfaction with distribution decisions.

"These types of often dangerous disputes have multiplied since 1995, in part because aid agency resources are one of the few sources of jobs and revenues (and hence stakes are high for local interests to corner them), and in part because the longer aid agencies operate in an area, the more grievances they accumulate" (Menkhaus, 2007b: 39).

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<sup>25</sup> This market knows many different spellings and is sometimes also referred to as Bakara market. The market derives its name from the Somali word *baqaar*, which means grain silo or storage.

<sup>26</sup> For the latest update on humanitarian access, see Map 7 at the end of this subsection.

Kidnapping of national and international staff for ransom has also become lucrative in the current conflict situation, leading to the rise of professional kidnapping rings (Ibrahim, 2009; Mushtaq, 2008). At the moment of writing, 13 humanitarian aid workers remain kidnapped in Somalia. Since January 2008, 43 aid workers have been killed in the country (UN, 2009: 1). This chronic insecurity has forced most aid organisations to move their headquarters to Nairobi. Only local staff resides in Somalia on a permanent basis, with distant expatriate managers giving orders from thousands of kilometres away. Consequently, the WFP has difficulty recruiting qualified staff for its operations (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 25).

WFP compounds are targets of attack. On 16 August 2009, armed militia attacked the WFP compound in Waajid in the Bakool region. This was the fourth UN compound attacked in Somalia in three months (UN, 2009: 3). Due to this insecurity, UNICEF was forced to postpone the dispatch of hundreds of tons of Food Aid to 85,000 acutely malnourished children in south-central Somalia (UN, 2009: 3). Between 2006 and 2008, pirates hijacked three WFP transport ships. The WFP needs four ships each month to transport about 40,000 tonnes of food. Currently, the organisation depends on the navies of a number of countries for protection (Righton, 2008).

Islamists insurgents, like al-Shabaab, seem to have launched a *jihad*-like campaign against humanitarians. “Recent postings on websites known to reflect hardline Somali Islamist views conflate all UN agencies with the West and the US, and consider them legitimate targets” (Menkhaus, 2007b: 39). Such attacks are in line with the Salafist ideology driving these groups. Salafis favour a rigid interpretation of Islamic texts. To them, any engagement with the West is tantamount to renunciation of the faith (Abdi, 2006). However, the Somali government also seems to block relief intentionally. TFG officials have started imposing a series of regulatory restrictions on the inflow of Food Aid into Mogadishu, for example ordering inspections of shipments so that no expired food would find its way to the capital (Human Rights Watch, 2007: 73). However, it lacked the inspectors to carry out this task (Human Rights Watch, 2007: 74, Menkhaus, 2007a: 387). In the absence of such inspectors, this had the effect of blocking Food Aid into the greater Mogadishu area. “For many, this looked suspiciously like an attempt to starve out the TFG’s opposition” (Menkhaus, 2007a: 387). Furthermore, the TFG has made it its policy to restrict relief inflows into areas of the capital under insurgent rule (Menkhaus, 2007a: 358).

“Restrictions included limiting humanitarian agency access to and use of airstrips outside Mogadishu (which were essential given the ongoing attacks on Mogadishu International Airport); blocking aid convoys; the imposition of new regulations on aid workers and relief material, including taxes; and threats to aid workers” (Human Rights Watch, 2007: 73).

Selective provisioning of Food Aid also takes place within IDP camps, although this seems mostly confined to newcomers in already overcrowded camps. Human Rights Watch (2008: 84) recounts how “[n]ew arrivals must sometimes wait weeks to be registered and be eligible to receive food assistance. Many cannot access the registration system at all”. Due to security considerations and limited staff numbers, Food Aid distribution is often left to local leaders at the village or IDP camp level and what happens with the food is in the hands of these leaders. Under such conditions, there have been

“allegations of widespread diversion of food aid by militia and other powerful actors before it reaches the community level, and widespread practices of the redistribution of food aid beyond the WFP-targeted recipients at the community level” (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 6). Particularly worrying here is the issue of gatekeepers.

Jaspars and Maxwell (2008: 24) define gatekeepers as “leaders”, who imposed themselves on vulnerable, often minority, communities and who control “access, information and resources” in those communities. Yet, they do not belong to that group and have their own agenda, “which usually does not prioritize the welfare of the community”. In particular, the “leaders” exploited Bantu minorities in this way. “In Mogadishu and other southern towns, IDPs have been reported to pay up to 50-75% of their earnings or food aid to aid gatekeepers, or are forced to work for the gatekeepers, in part for protection reasons” (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 12). Furthermore, IDPs are forced to move to areas where their clan dominates in order not to be excluded from relief once it is handed over to the local leaders.

#### **4.4.5 The (un)intentional effects of Food Aid on the conflict**

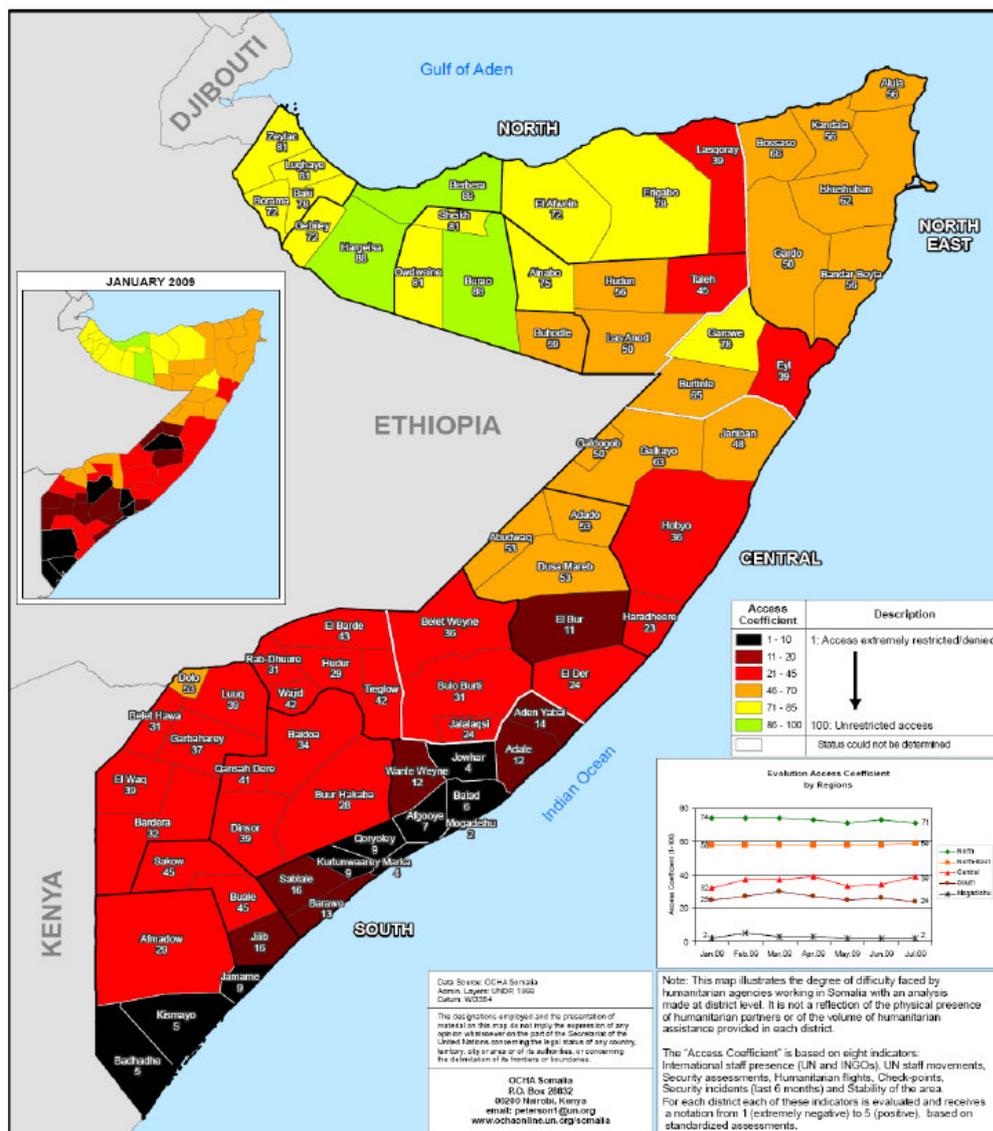
When discussing the (un)intentional effects of Food Aid in Somalia, it is important to take the extreme circumstances into account under which this Aid is being distributed. However, Somalia seems to have a history of the misappropriation of Food Aid. Somali society is currently anarchic and impoverished to such an extent that it would be futile to provide here a detailed analysis of the effects of Food Aid on conflict dynamics. It suffices to bear in mind that in a country with little other resources, Food Aid might well be one of the most lucrative things to fight over or divert. In a society where the proliferation of guns has turned the majority of the population into potential militia and thus where the line between civilians and militia has blurred, Food Aid proves one of the few resources that sustain the war efforts.

De Waal argues that international aid was complicit in Siad Barre’s dismantling of Somali civil society. This aid sustained Barre long after he would have otherwise fallen. His government used it selectively to reward followers and to ease out the brutish effects of the aforementioned land grabbing. “By the time of Siad Barre’s (overdue) overthrow in January 1991, Somalis were deeply cynical about the motives of any humanitarian or development assistance. The nature of aid as an incalculable resource continued to fuel war after Siad’s fall” (De Waal, 2002: 162). The subsequent struggles to control government, which continue today, should be interpreted as attempts to control these valuable resources. “Factional leaders mobilized their troops by promising future rewards (through looting and aid), not by tangible political reform or economic welfare” (De Waal, 2002: 162).

Aid in all its forms has become part of the war economy. Maintaining an ongoing crisis therefore benefits an intricate network of business elites, militia leaders and politicians, and these roles often overlap. Jaspars and Maxwell recount how

“there was reported not only to be a link but an overlap between these roles [of businessmen, local authorities, transporters and militiamen], i.e. the implementing partners are also businessmen, perhaps have members or relatives on the local authorities (committees) and almost always have their own militia. Clan leaders, or members of the committee, in some cases may also be militia commanders” (Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 24).

As I mentioned earlier, in any conflict combatants always seem to be the last to die of hunger. “While aid organisations aim to target less advantaged sections of the population and attempt to alleviate the negative economic impacts that exist within a stratified system, access to such groups is not without contact with and consent from those who hold positions of power” (Montani and Majid, 2002: 2). In Somali society, which is highly stratified along clan lines and within clans, combined with the constraints placed on Food Aid distributors, it is virtually impossible to prevent Food Aid falling into the wrong hands. The WFP’s choice for the distribution of cooked meals in Mogadishu, rather than dry rations, which are more prone to looting, reflects this desperate attempt to get food to the civilian population (De Waal, 2002: 169; Jaspars and Maxwell, 2008: 16).



Map 7: Humanitarian Access Map Somalia July 2009 (OCHA Somalia, 2009: 7).

#### 4.4.6 Conclusion and theoretical implications

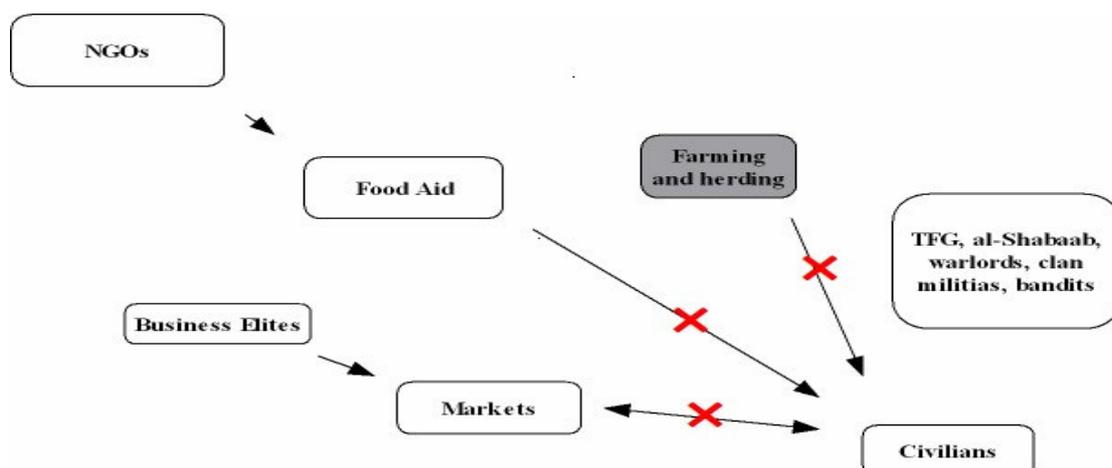
Contrary to my findings in the previous case study, the distinction provided by Macrae and Zwi into acts of omission, commission and provision, seems not to be as useful in the case of Somalia. The country has not had a functioning government since 1991 and the term act of omission seems ill suited to describe the current state of non-policy with regard to food security. Can we speak of an act of omission when there is

in fact no act at all? Acts of commission and provision do occur frequently in Somalia, with attacks on Food Aid featuring centrally. Attacks on Food Aid can be defined as acts of commission, namely directed against the procurement of food. This is the case with violence during relief distribution, as well as the looting of rations. However, when such looting practices are of an increased scale, they can serve as deliberate diversion of Food Aid. Such acts, technically speaking, could also be classified as acts of provision. For clarity's sake, in this analysis I have placed all instances of looting under acts of commission.

In Somalia, a war economy has developed over the last eighteen years, where attacks on food security reinforce a state of chaos and food insecurity, which in turn attracts greater quantities of humanitarian aid. This creates a vicious cycle, where militia feed off humanitarian assistance and need to maintain a state of violence to continue their war effort. The next section will provide more insight into the logic behind attacks on food security.

Figure 6 provides a visual clarification of the use of food as a weapon in Somalia. Figure 6 seems to come closest to Figure 4 described in Chapter Two, yet differs in the level of control the combatants manage to exercise over the food supply lines to civilians. This is also the fundamental difference between Figure 6 and Figure 5 of the previous Chapter. In Darfur, the combatants manage to position themselves in the centre of all food supply lines to civilians acting as a barrier between civilians and their livelihoods. In Figure 6 combatants do not function as such a permanent barrier but attack all different supply lines (depicted by the red crosses) on such a regular basis that these supply lines are greatly undermined. However, no party in the current conflict exercises such a level of control over these supply lines that would qualify as a barrier like in the case of Darfur. If there would be any barrier in Somalia, it would be the general state of insecurity or lawlessness that all the warring parties together help to create.

In this model, although farming and herding activities are greatly reduced (depicted in grey), markets manage to operate remarkably well. Business elites deserve a specific mention, as they are crucial to maintaining some level of food security (at least to those who can afford it). Market activity in Darfur was much more strictly managed or controlled by the GoS and the Janjaweed. Contrary to Darfur, however, there seems to be no large-scale sale of relief grain on local markets in Somalia. This could be explained by the fact that rations might be smaller in Somalia, leaving little excess food to be traded on the markets. However, data to test this hypothesis are lacking. Furthermore, the power of business elites and their continuous ability to import foodstuff might also prevent the large-scale resale of Food Aid rations, as this would undermine their market position. However, this hypothesis would also need further investigation.



**Figure 6: The use of food as a weapon in Somalia**

## 4.5 The effectiveness of the “hunger weapon”

### 4.5.1 Introduction

The previous section dealt with the question “how” attacks on food security take place in Somalia. Here I observed some interesting differences with the previous case study, relating to the duration of the conflict as well as the levels of authority of the governments in Khartoum and Mogadishu respectively. In this section, I will deal with the “Why?” question, where I will investigate whether the rationale behind attacks on food security is also different in the case of Somalia, and whether these differences have the same origin as those observed in the previous section. Again, I have divided this section into a political, economic and military component.

### 4.5.2 The political logic

With the exception of the marginalised groups in the south-central part of Somalia, food production and procurement seem to be attacked without the intent to destroy the livelihoods of specific ethnic groups, as was the case in Darfur. In Darfur, food security was attacked in such a way that it became impossible for non-Arab tribes to return to their previous modes of existence. In Somalia, this is not the case. Food production and procurement are temporarily diverted rather than being permanently destroyed, in order to benefit a specific group, clan or militia politically or economically. In Somalia, attacks on food security serve power relationships rather than genocidal intent. Attacks on food security contain a superficial political logic, but politics merely serve to mask a deeper economic struggle for a share in the meagre resources of the country.

The homogeneous nature of Somali society might partially explain this. Although fighting along clan lines has continued for nearly two decades now, this fighting is essentially about power relations and important government positions. However, there seems to be no deeper ideology at the basis of these quarrels. The ability of Somali society to form ever-changing alliances and to unite when faced with an external enemy testifies to this. Gettleman argues that “Somali society often divides and subdivides when faced with internal disputes, but it quickly bands together when confronted by an external enemy”

(Gettleman, 2009a). Keith Ursel confirms that attacks on food security in Somalia are carried out for power and profit, but not to realise some broader political goal, as in Darfur.

“In Somalia attacks and destruction of society both contribute to food insecurity, but here we do not see a methodical destruction of farms, livestock, warehouses etc, like I saw in the early days of Kosovo. Food and associated commodities, tools etc are stolen for profit and power” (Ursel, 2009).

Ursel does stress that controlling Food Aid flows into specific regions gives militia a valuable power resource.

“To steal it or change the location of the distribution has many benefits to a warring party. It is a way to fund a conflict and a way to gain political support from a district of villagers. It is much more manipulation of food movement's, then a theft, that is how they see it” (Ursel, 2009).

Besteman (1999: 18-19) records how warlords used their large weapon arsenals to acquire food in order to maintain their patronage networks. This enabled them to maintain their power grip. The Bantu peoples, seen as third-class citizen anyway, were the main victims of such practices (Worldbank, 2005: 41).

“After using their arms to cut off the food supply and to undermine the ability of the people to produce their own food in areas they wished to bring under their sphere of influence, the warlords turned to looting food relief as a strategy to finance the large patronage systems on which they relied” (Besteman, 1999: 18-19).

Thus, attacks on food security do serve a political purpose. However, this political rationale is rather shallow and limited to obtaining support and hence power. Yet, this power is only a means to an end, and this end is a share in the economic resources.

Attacks on food security are sometimes a tool in a wider campaign of political discrediting. An example in this case would be the arrest in 2007 of the WFP director in Somalia at the time. Prior to the arrest, the WFP had started distributing food in mosques in Mogadishu. The local governor, who consented to this, was a supporter of Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Ghedi. The politician, who controls food distribution in the eyes of the population, has a powerful position, and President Ahmed did not want Ghedi to appear to be in this position. The members of the National Security Service (NSS), who kidnapped the WFP director, were under command of the President (Ursel, 2009; NRC Next, 2007).

#### **4.5.3 The economic logic**

Behind clan rivalry and fundamentalism an entirely different motive is helping to fuel the conflict in Somalia, namely profit. The anarchy has created a completely new class of opportunists who feed off the chaos. They do not pay taxes and do not possess any skills that would be of use in a peaceful society and are increasingly and openly teaming up with the insurgents. Gettleman quoted a Mogadishu businessman, who started renting out rooms in the former Ministry of Minerals and Water, as saying he will do whatever it takes to thwart the government's plans to reclaim pieces of public property. “If this government survives, how will I?” (Gettleman, 2007).

The Worldbank confirmed this mentality in 2005. The report claims that a whole generation, deprived of schooling, saw conflict, plunder and extortion as their only means of livelihood.

“Some businessmen were enriched by war-related criminal activities such as weapons sales, diversion of food aid, drug production, and exportation of scrap metal. And whole clans found themselves in possession of valuable urban and riverine real estate won by conquest, which they stood to lose in a peace settlement” (Worldbank, 2005: 11).

The Somali economy is now largely driven by those whose best interests are served by no government at all; the businessmen bringing in expired medicine and baby formula, armsdealers and those harbouring terrorists. After the central government imploded in 1991, Somali businessmen took over previously public services, and those able to seize abandoned government property, like ports and airfields hit the jackpot. Such property can make up to \$40,000 a day and is especially valuable, as all humanitarian aid needs to come into the country via these privatised ports and airstrips. Food Aid quickly became part of the war economy, fought over by militia and diverted by warlords (Worldbank, 2005: 11).

Thus, these businessmen have a stake in perpetuating food insecurity, as it ensures a steady cash flow in taxes from NGOs. Beneath this class of warlords, there exists a whole clan-based network of thousands of people, such as truck drivers, clerks, and militiamen, who are all tied into the “chaos economy”. Gettleman even recounts how in some areas, IDPs are forced to pay a “shade tax” to local residents for resting in the shade of their trees (Gettleman, 2007). Furthermore, on the lowest level, the state of lawlessness allows for looting. De Waal recounts how looting served commercial purposes, particularly in the case of the large-scale theft of cattle for export to Kenya (De Waal, 2002: 165). The chaos also opened up opportunities for extortion. “Some villages came to agreements with the Marehan forces; they would pay a certain amount of animals or grain as a tribute, or collect tribute from other villages, in return for being left in peace”(De Waal, 2002: 165).

Consequently, instances of pillaging and looting only declined when nearly all public or valuable property was owned by powerful elites, whose interests would be hurt by a continuous state of conflict. Furthermore, the Worldbank report (2005:12) notes that pillaging and looting only really subsided when Somali business interests shifted away from profits that could be made out of the war economy towards other quasi-legal business ventures, which actually needed security to flourish.

#### **4.5.4 The military logic**

Finally, the military logic of attacks on food security is most obvious. For many young and illiterate Somalis, becoming a militiaman is a regular job decision. Being a militiaman and having a weapon provides a way to obtain food in a country where food is scarce and hyperinflation has put even simple staple foods beyond the reach of many. De Waal (2002: 164) recounts how “militia looted to sustain themselves, storming villages at night and carrying away what they could, and exacting taxes at checkpoints on roads and villages” (De Waal, 2002: 164). According to De Waal, looting was sometimes systematically organised. “[The troops] would see the smoke from cooking, and come to that place and loot the food for themselves” (De Waal, 2002: 165).

#### **4.5.5 Conclusion and theoretical implications**

Contrary to the previous case study, attacks on food security in Somalia are much more economically than politically motivated. This broader political agenda existed in the early years after 1991, yet as the country plunged into chaos, attacking food security became a way to perpetuate a state of chaos and keep lucrative Food Aid shipments flowing into the country. Somalia, an arid and fundamentally food insecure country without any significant natural resources, has developed a war economy that immensely benefits a few powerful elites, sustains numerous others, and has impoverished the masses. To keep lucrative humanitarian aid organisations involved in the country there has to be a perpetual humanitarian crisis. Attacks on food security are just one way to ensure this.

Essentially, the rationale behind attacks on food security in Darfur and Somalia follows the same pattern over the years. I stressed in the previous Chapter that such attacks in Darfur now start to follow the lines of a war economy, where the economic gains of looting and extortion now sustain and even enrich the militia. The conflict in Somalia is 12 years older than that in Darfur and here the war economy has shifted into full gear.

Moreover, in Somalia, there is no effective government to supervise a broader political strategy using attacks on food security. Such attacks out of economic or military gain require much less coordination and are thus more prevalent in an anarchic country like Somalia. Furthermore, in ethnically homogeneous Somalia, there is no tradition of systematic and politically motivated attacks on one specific ethnic group and large-scale acts of omission with the aim of punishing such a group have been absent.

#### **4.6 Conclusion and implications**

Drawing on the theory of Chapter Two, I aimed in this second case study to analyse the use of food as a weapon in Somalia, in order to evaluate whether attacks on food security in this country are in line with my hypotheses as outlined in Chapter One. Furthermore, I have drawn on findings from the previous case study to highlight some interesting differences and similarities. The concluding Chapter, which follows hereafter, will provide a more elaborate comparison.

The first section provided an overview of conflict dynamics in Somalia since 1991. Although Somalia is one of the most ethnically homogeneous countries on the continent, here clan dynamics undermine national unity. Some argue that traditional explanations of the conflict favour clan dynamics and challenging environmental conditions over the economic stratification of Somali society and the role of self-interested elites. In the light of the flourishing war economy, this observation seems to hold true. Throughout the conflict, warlords have used their militia to expropriate land from (agro-)pastoralist communities, subduing them to a class of subservient day labourers. Competition for resources amongst these elites has fuelled conflict for nearly two decades and has undermined attempts at stability.

The second section analysed the impact of conflict on livelihoods in Somalia. Livelihoods can be divided into pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and riverine agriculturalists. Pastoralist clans have been dominant in terms of economic and political power and have marginalised the other two groups considerably, both throughout and prior to the conflict. Previously rather food secure regions are now at the heart of the humanitarian crisis, as coping strategies have been undermined. Moreover, food insecurity

for many groups is indeed a matter of access over availability. Markets in Somalia have remained operational and dynamic and business elites still manage to import large quantities of food. However, rising food prices worldwide, as well as hyperinflation domestically have put even staple foods beyond the reach of the needy. Conflict has become such an integral part of Somali reality that the local population have adapted in order to retain some level of normalcy. Nevertheless, conflict has changed the livelihoods of all three groups mentioned above to a significant extent.

In the third section, I found that the theoretical framework provided by Macrae and Zwi, which divides attacks of food security into acts of omission, commission and provision, is not as useful as in the previous case study. The absence of an effective government in Somalia during the past two decades raises questions about the definition of acts of omission, especially with regard to required capacity and intentions of a government to carry out such acts. Acts of commission and provision are much more frequent, with an emphasis on attacks on Food Aid over food production and procurement. In Somalia, such attacks reinforce a state of chaos and food insecurity, which attracts lucrative Food Aid, creating a vicious cycle. In the visual summary presented at the end of section three, I outline the lower levels of control the different actors are able to exercise over the food supply lines to non-combatants. Furthermore, specific mention is made of the important role of business elites in maintaining a resilient and dynamic market system.

The final section outlined the political, economic and military logics behind attacks on food security in Somalia. Although all three logics are present here, there seems to be a strong emphasis on the economic rationale behind such attacks. Similar to the case of Darfur, the prominence of the different logics has changed over the years, as economic factors replaced political considerations. Currently, such a political rationale merely seems to serve an underlying struggle for access to resources. Somalia has developed a war economy that benefits a few powerful elites, but has impoverished the masses. Food Aid is a lucrative resource, which, in the absence of any significant natural resources, has acquired strategic importance. However, this resource will only be available as long as there is a humanitarian crisis, and attacks on food security sustain such a crisis.

## Conclusion

This conclusion first aims to present the main findings from the research, comparing and contrasting the previous case studies of Darfur and Somalia, in the light of the central question and hypotheses provided in Chapter One. This will be followed by an overview of the policy implications stemming from this research with regard to the distribution of Food Aid in African civil conflict. Here I will provide some modest recommendations on how humanitarian aid could have less “side effects” and be made more accountable. These two sections are concluded by suggestions for further research.

### 5.1 Main findings from the research

The central research question throughout this research has been the following: *What similarities exist in combatants’ control over food supply lines to non-combatants in civil conflicts in Darfur and Somalia? Are the similarities sufficient to permit generalisations about this issue?* It is important to bear in mind here that two case studies are insufficient to permit any infallible conclusions, and rather, I aimed to gain more insight in the way food is used as a weapon in these two conflict situation. Throughout my research I have been guided by the question whether hunger in conflict situations is “man-made” or whether it is an unfortunate and unwanted outcome by all sides in these conflicts. Thus, are attacks on food security deliberate and rational?

I commenced this research with two hypotheses. First, I expected to find a general pattern in which combatants use the control over food supply lines to non-combatants during civil conflict as a means of power. Second, I assumed that the control over food supply lines differs essentially from the control over other resources in the purpose it serves. I expected this purpose to be first and foremost the control over the non-combatant population and only thereafter the quest for revenue.

#### 5.1.1 Generalisations about the use of food as a weapon

With regard to the first hypothesis regarding the ability to generalise, I divided my research up into three sections. First, I dealt with the effect conflict had on food security and livelihoods in Darfur and Somalia. Thereafter, I analysed the different ways this food security is attacked by combatants, drawing on Macrae and Zwi’s framework of acts of omission, commission and provision. Finally, I outlined the different rationales behind attacks on food production, procurement and Food Aid, distinguishing between a political, economic and military logic. I will now provide the major findings from my research with regard to these three sections. Thereafter, I will evaluate my second hypothesis.

##### 5.1.1.1 Effect of conflict on livelihoods and food security in Darfur and Somalia

I found many similarities between the two cases concerning the impact of conflict on livelihoods and food security. Regarding the origins of food insecurity and famine, throughout this study, the work of in particular Sen (1981), De Waal (2002), Green (1994), Keen (1991, 1994) and Rangasami (1985) has influenced my analysis. Sen made the important contribution to the debate that food security is much more

an issue of both limited availability of food in conjunction with imperfect access to food. Famine is hardly ever the result of a lack of food, but more often caused by people being denied access to food. Different households are affected by famines in different ways and a famine has never occurred in a functioning liberal democracy. Green (1994) furthermore argued that without war, drought in Africa has seldom resulted in massive loss of life. Rangasami (1985) and Keen (1994) finally observed that famines are highly functional and create winners and losers.

These observations hold true in both cases. In Darfur, despite unfavourable climatic and geographical conditions, the region was normally able to achieve food self-sufficiency in the absence of conflict and the more prosperous parts of the region even produced a surplus (Buchanan-Smith and Jaspars, 2006: 7). As a result of the conflict, these surpluses disappeared and the breakdown of transportation networks cut deficit areas off from potential surpluses. In Somalia, the main victims of the succeeding famines were the politically and economically marginalised agro-pastoralist and agriculturalist clans and especially Bantu peoples. These communities populate the most fertile parts of the country. Since the 1980s, powerful elites in Mogadishu have exploited these clans and deprived them of their land, turning these marginalised farmers into wage labourers. Hyperinflation in Somalia reinforced Sen's observation. Somali merchants still manage to bring substantial quantities of food into the country, yet this food is beyond the reach of many in need due to skyrocketing food prices combined with a monumental depreciation of the Somali shilling.

Green's argument that, without war, drought in Africa has seldom resulted in massive loss of life is also confirmed in both cases, yet with some reservations. Both regions are rather food insecure. In Darfur, droughts caused massive loss of life during the 1984 famine and in Somalia one in five harvests is a partial failure and one in ten a complete failure. However, the effect of conflict is felt in the limiting of coping mechanisms. During the 1984 famine, Darfuris chose not to eat their seed or sell off livestock and withstood remarkable periods of hunger in order to be able to rebuild their livelihood after the famine. Such coping strategies have been undermined in both Darfur and Somalia as people have lost their livestock and means of livelihood to raiding and looting. Especially in Somalia, communities have been systematically impoverished by continuous conflict. Malnutrition levels used to vary in Somalia according to season but are now remarkably stable throughout the year, indicating that surplus-producing areas have been cut off from deficit areas as transportation has become dangerous and costly.

The dynamics described by Keen (1994: 112) regarding how conflict changes livelihoods, were very visible in Darfur, but much less so in Somalia. In both countries, raiding and looting disrupted economic life and stripped communities of their assets. Victims tried to sell the remaining assets, including labour in order to buy grain. Subsequently, the price of grain shot up, while the remuneration for labour plummeted. Yet, in Somalia, scorched-earth tactics like those employed in Darfur, were only sporadic and IDPs were usually able at some point to return to their original livelihoods when the security situation permitted. A major difference between both cases concerns the price of grain. In Darfur, the sale of relief rations allowed the price of grain to remain fairly stable, enabling the majority of the population to afford this staple food. Yet, in Somalia, hyperinflation has put such staples beyond the reach of the most needy.

### **5.1.1.2 The use of food as a weapon: acts of omission, commission and provision**

In order to analyse the use of food as a weapon in Darfur and Somalia, I made use of the framework provided by Macrae and Zwi (1992; 1994), who distinguish between acts of omission, commission and provision. Acts of omission are defined as “failures to act” (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 11) and occur when governments fail “to manage food reserves and to instigate and facilitate appropriate emergency measures” (Macrae and Zwi 1992: 301). Thus, acts of omission include failures to facilitate relief operations as well as the mismanagement of existing food resources. Acts of commission concern the production and procurement of food (Macrae and Zwi, 1992: 303; Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 13-19) and relate to those actions that effectively obstruct coping strategies and undermine agricultural production. Such acts concern attacks on production and procurement, including attacks of Food Aid convoys, safe corridors and markets, and forced population relocation. Acts of provision, finally, occur when food is “selectively provided to government supporters, to those from whom support is sought, or to lure sections of the populations to areas controlled by the military” (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 19). These acts generally involve control over Food Aid in order to obstruct or divert it.

In the case of Darfur, the framework provided by Macrae and Zwi proved very useful to describe the use of food as a weapon. All three types of acts were present in this case, although the lines between the different categories might be blurry at times. It was interesting to note how all three types of acts occurred in unison and should be seen as part of a complete strategy for civil conflict, used by most sides, in which the use of food as a weapon plays a crucial role. In Darfur, different ethnic groups could be distinguished from each other by their means of livelihoods and targeting these livelihoods proved part of the genocidal plan drawn up by the GoS to erase the presence of black African communities from the region. In Sudan, the GoS largely engineered the humanitarian crisis and the delivery of Food Aid is undermined on a daily basis.

In Somalia, the distinction provided by Macrae and Zwi is not to be as useful. The definition of acts of omission proves difficult to apply to a country, which has not had a functioning government since 1991. The term act of omission seems ill suited to describe the current state of non-policy with regard to food security. Furthermore, attacks on Food Aid can be defined as acts of commission, namely directed against the procurement of food, but also as acts of provision. Acts of commission might refer to violence and looting during relief distribution. Yet, when such looting practices are of an increased scale, and might serve to divert Food Aid, these acts could also be classified as acts of provision.

In Darfur, the combatants exercised a greater level of control over food supply lines to non-combatants, effectively acting as a barrier between civilians and their livelihoods. In Somalia combatants do not act as such a permanent barrier but attack all different supply lines on such a regular basis that these supply lines are greatly undermined. Yet, no party is powerful enough to exercise the levels of control as witnessed in Darfur. In Somalia, the greatest barrier is the general state of insecurity or lawlessness that all the warring parties together create. Another difference between the two cases concerns the position of business elites and traders. In Darfur, market activity was greatly reduced, as traders encountered

significant obstruction from the GoS. Yet, in Somalia, these business elites *are* in a way the state. They profit tremendously from the general condition of lawlessness and are closely interlinked with the militia. These militia in turn provide the necessary level of security for these traders to run their business. In contrast to Darfur, there does not seem to be a large-scale grassroots resale of relief rations. A potential explanation might be that rations in Somalia are smaller. However, it could also be the case that Somalia's "moneylords" obstruct such a resale as it might undermine their own market position. To investigate this difference, further research would be needed.

### **5.1.1.3 The logic behind the use of food as a weapon in Darfur and Somalia**

In Chapter Two, in line with Duffield (1994), Keen (1991), De Waal (1989; 2002), Polman (2009), Stewart (1998) and Macrae and Zwi (1992), I argue that famine in African civil conflict is highly functional and has a distinct political-economic character. A group of winners will act to prolong the state of food insecurity at the expense of masses of losers. In short, the creation of famine is often deliberate, with a hidden political agenda. Starvation as a tactic of war is effective and cheap in ecologically and economically vulnerable societies such as Sudan and Somalia. In order to sustain one's own group and ensure loyalty, it is essential to be able to secure food. On the contrary, to prevent opposing groups to secure food will cause their defeat (Stewart, 1998: 563). Furthermore, a famine will almost certainly attract Food Aid, which is an economically and politically valuable resource.

Macrae and Zwi (1992: 301) identify three primary purposes for attacks on food security; political, economic and military. By undermining the ability of communities to produce and procure food, they are placed at the mercy of combatants. Moreover, by keeping food supplies limited, merchants can make significant profits out of this situation of scarcity. During conflict, some groups become economic "winners". Food Aid proves an extremely valuable resource in this regard, not only in the direct economic value of the distributed goods, but also in the quantity of jobs and contracts that come in its wake. Finally, combatants need food in order to survive and often depend on the civilian population to provide them with this.

The political logic of attacks on Food Aid was most important in Darfur, although here we saw the signs of a sustainable war economy similar to the one that is in full gear in Somalia. Part of Khartoum's strategy of attacks on livelihoods has been to contain ethnic groups affiliated with the different rebel groups. By creating a human catastrophe that forced these communities from their land, this land could be resettled by communities loyal to the GoS. Such a mass resettlement also served an important electoral purpose as Arab groups resettled areas where demographic change was needed to secure electoral victories. For the Janjaweed it is also important to create a sustainable crisis, as this will make Khartoum dependent on its alliance with this Arab militia to control Darfur. Furthermore, the Arab communities that have resettled abandoned areas will continue to depend on the Janjaweed for their protection. Finally, the IDP population in the camps, although hostile to the GoS, also knows it is dependent on it in order to get access to Food Aid deliveries. This was confirmed by the UNAMID humanitarian liaison in Darfur. Attacks on humanitarian aid are a way for Khartoum to pressurise Western governments, as many of the aid workers

are westerners and the West heavily funds the humanitarian operation in Darfur. The two major waves of increased violence against relief agencies coincided with Western interference in what Khartoum saw as essentially domestic affairs.

In contrast, in Somalia, food production and procurement seem to be attacked without the intent to destroy the livelihoods of specific societal groups, with the exception of the politically and economically marginalised groups in the south-central part of the country. Attacks on food security serve power relationships rather than genocidal intent. The political logic is very superficial in Somalia and is hardly more than a cover for an economically driven struggle for limited resources. This might be explained by the ethnically homogeneous nature of Somali society, where clans form and break alliances out of pragmatism rather than ideology. Keith Ursel, Senior Programme Advisor for the WFP in Somalia, who was previously assigned to Kosovo confirms that in Somalia, there is no methodical destruction of farms, livestock and warehouses as seen in more ideologically and ethnically motivated conflicts like Kosovo.

This contrast between the ideologically driven conflict in Darfur and the state of chaos in Somalia, combined with the presence (Sudan) or absence (Somalia) of an effective government is a very interesting observation that ensues from this research. The level of deliberateness and organisation of attacks on food security, and hence the importance of the political logic, seem to tie in with the level of organisation of the central government, as well as with the presence or absence of a powerful ideology that clearly divides certain sections of the population from others. An interesting observation here is how the political logic in Darfur became less important as the conflict progressed and the region became more anarchic. It seems that the onset of a war economy renders the political rationale behind attacks on food security less important. As the parties to the conflict splintered, the use of food as a weapon became less deliberate and more economically driven. A large-scale politically motivated campaign against the food security and livelihoods of specific societal groups requires a certain degree of coordination. When conflict undermines, rather than reinforces, political control, this coordination of a long-term political strategy gives way to short-term and direct economic gains by the combatants carrying out the attacks.

I strongly encourage further research to investigate whether this observation holds when comparing other conflict situations. Cases of anarchy that come to mind would be the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Sierra Leone a few years ago, these cases could be compared to, for example, Kosovo or Bosnia in the 1990s.

With regard to the economic logic, I found in my research that attacks on food security are part of a war economy in both countries. The evidence for this was strongest in the case of Somalia. The quest for profit seems to be one of the main drivers of the current conflict and a new class of opportunists have emerged, which benefits from the current chaos. This chaos has resulted in an appalling humanitarian crisis, which in turn led to a major influx of humanitarian relief. The profit that can be made of this aid, by means of control or diversion, but also through jobs, contracts and tenders is enormous. Some, in Darfur, but especially in Somalia, have become economic winners, at the expense of a great multitude of losers. Furthermore, the longer a conflict lasts, the more economic activity will be geared towards those enterprises that are profitable in a conflict zone. In Somalia, a whole generation has grown up with few

skills that could be of use in a peaceful society. Societal roles start to overlap, where businessmen can be militia commanders and politicians at the same time.

The military logic behind attacks on food security is most obvious and present in both case studies in more or less the same way. Militiamen need to eat. In the absence of a government or a strong central command, which takes care of the logistical aspects of their military campaigns, these combatants are forced to live off the land and its people. This is a dangerous process, as it blurs the lines between combatants and the civilian population, turning the latter into a potential target for attack by opposing forces. Furthermore, the promise of a means of livelihood when being a militiaman attracts unemployed youths in both case studies, especially when their previous livelihoods have been destroyed (Darfur), or when they have grown up in a war zone (Somalia).

### **5.1.2 The different purpose of control over food supply**

My second hypothesis concerned the difference between the control over food supply and the control over “traditional” resources. I assumed that the control over food supply lines differs essentially from the control over other resources in the purpose it serves. I expected this purpose to be primarily the control over the non-combatants population and only thereafter the quest for revenue. Research on resources and conflict is substantially larger than that dedicated to hunger and conflict (see for example Herbst, 2000; Ron, 2005; Collier and Hoeffler, 2002 and 2004; Duyvestein, 2000; Lujala, Petter and Gilmore, 2005; Fearon, 2005; Le Billon, 2004).

Literature on resource wars focuses strongly on exportable and lootable resources, which can include food, yet only to the extent that it is suited for export in a profitable manner. However, the profit margins of locally produced food for the domestic market are too low to make export profitable. Thus, I assumed that combatants want to control food supply lines within and into a conflict zone with the aim to subdue the local population. This can be done through the omission of measures to ensure food security in certain regions, attacks on production and procurement of food, as well as selective provision to punish or reward (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 11-19). I assumed that attacks on food security do not constitute the economic foundation under the war efforts.

From the analysis provided above on the economic rationale behind attacks on food production, procurement and Food Aid, it seems that this second hypothesis should be discarded. I expected that the economic purpose of attacks on food security would not preside over the political purpose. Yet, especially in the case of Somalia, this hypothesis does not hold. Also in Darfur, where we now note the early stages of a war economy, this economic rationale is rapidly gaining in importance. Especially Food Aid seems to function to some degree as a “traditional” resource, with regard to its economic importance. As the conflicts under study progressed, it seemed that the rationale behind the control over food production and procurement and especially Food Aid approaches that of ordinary resources. In some conflict situations, such as Somalia, humanitarian aid is one of the last resources left to fight about. To ensure the availability of this resource, the humanitarian crisis needs to be sustained. This can be done by directly and indirectly undermining food security, by means of acts of omission, commission and provision.

However, the political and military logic of attacks on food security should not be underestimated. I would therefore not go as far as to argue that the theory on resource wars is suited to describe attacks on food security. I only observe here that some aspects of the use of the “hunger weapon” seem to fall in line with resource war theory. To what extent such theory proves useful to explain the economic logic behind attacks on Food Aid would be a relevant topic for further research. Furthermore, a more integrated political-economy approach can prove useful to explain attacks on food security.

## **5.2 Policy implications: Mitigating the negative effects of Food Aid.**

It would go beyond the scope of my research to identify all the policy implications that arise from it. For the sake of conciseness, I have chosen one issue that I feel is most prominent. This issue relates to the principal question I was asked when explaining my research to others and concerns the role of Food Aid in African civil conflict. In layman’s terms, this question would sound something like: “Oh, so you suggest we should stop all Food Aid and just let people starve?” The following section will deal with this question and the policy implications that flow from it.

In both case studies, Food Aid proved an incredibly valuable resource that can fund or even sustain a genocidal regime, as in the case of Sudan, or can be one of the prime spoils of war sustaining a state of anarchy, as in Somalia. Many instances come to mind where Food Aid was actually complicit in creating and prolonging human suffering, as illustrated by the cases of Biafra, the resettlement policies of the Dergue in Ethiopia in the 1980s and the Hutu refugee warriors in Goma in 1994. Should we then completely stop delivering humanitarian aid?

This is not what I am suggesting. What I do advocate is an open discussion about the perils and merits of such aid. This discussion is currently laced with emotion. I suggest that we do not exempt the humanitarian system of careful analysis and scrutiny. Humanitarian aid workers feel they have a duty to alleviate human suffering, even if that involves helping the bad guys. Their argument goes as follows: If a drunk driver kills another driver and ends up wounded in the street, you cannot leave him or her to bleed to death, even this drunk driver is entitled to help like any other human being (Polman, 2009: 168). However, in my opinion, this argument does not hold. In a democratic society with respect for the law, you get the drunk driver to the hospital and afterwards surrender him to the police. The police then, ideally, put the driver behind bars and ensure that he does not kill anybody in the future. However, humanitarian aid organisations operate in countries where such a legal system does not exist, or only serves one party. They, therefore, do carry responsibility for the effects of their aid.

The question, thus, is not whether we should refrain from giving any humanitarian aid. The question is rather at what point humanitarian principles stop being ethical. When governments and militia use Food Aid for political ends, then humanitarian agencies cannot afford to be apolitical. However, binding agreements on ethical boundaries within the humanitarian community do not exist. Furthermore, the humanitarian community can easily avoid the blame. Many NGOs only specialise in one small aspect of aid, in a specific region and can point to other or bigger organisations when things go wrong. Furthermore, they point to a failing “international community” or a “lack of political will” to solve conflict

and hunger in the world. However, in my opinion, these aid agencies have to acknowledge that they work in a world where the political will to solve conflict and hunger simply *does not exist*.<sup>27</sup>

After the debacle in Goma, the humanitarian community seemed to be dedicated to an extensive inquiry into its own operations (Buchanan-Smith, 2003: 9-11). Key players from all over the humanitarian field came together. The objective of this meeting, as formulated in the Sphere project's initial proposal (SCHR, 1997: 5) was

“[t]o elaborate technical standards, which agencies should seek to implement, without reference in any way to the rights or aspirations of the assisted beneficiaries and claimants risks becoming a self-serving exercise concerned more with agencies' accountability to donors, than the rights of people affected by disaster. We therefore believe that any set of 'industry' standards must first be prefaced by a set of 'consumer rights'; a beneficiaries or claimants charter, which highlights what, under existing international law and declarations, a person should have a 'right' to in a humanitarian crisis.”

Subsequently, these technical standards were turned into a handbook, the *Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in disaster response* (Sphere Project, 2004).<sup>28</sup> However, this handbook provides recommendation instead of enforceable rules.

A similar industry-based review mechanism, the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), publishes the *Review of Humanitarian Action*, of which the most recent eighth edition was issued in July 2009. In the seventh edition, John Mitchell noted, “as every year goes by it is increasingly clear that the system is unable to assess its own performance. There are still no baselines, no agreed definitions of performance and an absence of any kind of mechanism able to track performance” (Mitchell, 2008: 17). This is essentially the same conclusion the humanitarian community made in 1994.

Yet, it is not just the humanitarian community that should take responsibility. It is also up to donor governments, the general population, who gives money to fundraisers, as well as the media to demand more accountability and better performance on the part of the Food Aid community. With regard to ordinary people, Polman (2009: 172) urges to “dare to spoil the mood at national fundraisers: ask the humanitarians questions! If they claim that their aid helps, ask who is being helped with that food or those drugs. Innocent victims, warlords, or both?” It is important to confront the humanitarian community whether doing something is always better than doing nothing.

### 5.3 Suggestions for further research

From the concluding remarks outlined above, three fields for further research stand out. First, it would be valuable to investigate to what extent the degree of effective government control and/or the presence of a

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<sup>27</sup> Corruption, especially in the African context, is also often blamed for obstructing the effective distribution of Food Aid. Yet, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, Italy (55) is more corrupt than Botswana (36), Poland (58) is worse than South Africa (54) and Bulgaria (72) is more corrupt than Ghana (67) (Transparency International, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> For an overview of the origins of the Sphere Project please see Peter Walker and Susan Purdin. 2004. “Birthing Sphere”, *Disasters*. 28 (2): 100-111 and Buchanan-Smith, M. 2003. *How the Sphere Project Came into Being: A Case Study of Policy-Making in the Humanitarian Aid Sector and the Relative Influence of Research*. ODI Working Paper 215, July 2003.

binding ideology impacts on the importance of the political logic behind the use of food as a weapon. In my research, I find evidence for a relation between these factors. However, two case studies are not enough to *prove* such a theory. Thus, this research should be extended to include more case studies, with a specific focus on the factors of governmental control, ideology and political logic.

Second, it was beyond the scope of this research to evaluate to what extent traditional theory regarding the relation between resources and conflict can be useful in explaining attacks on food security. However, especially in the case of Somalia, it seemed that humanitarian aid could be identified as a resource in a country with little other resources. The question whether humanitarian aid could really be defined as such a resource needs to be addressed in further research.

Finally, as the previous section on policy implications highlighted, more work needs to be done on how to mitigate the side effects of Food Aid. Humanitarian aid workers, despite their promise to remain independent, cannot afford to be apolitical when their aid is used for political ends. It is important that the levels of accountability need to be improved across the humanitarian spectrum. Currently, market dynamics in the relief community ensure that when one organisation pulls out of a country as a protest against the misuse and diversion of their aid, others are waiting to fill the gap. This way, it is extremely difficult to effect any change and thus to mitigate the negative side effects of Food Aid in African civil conflict. Further research is essential to identify mechanisms that can increase such accountability.

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## **Appendix I: List of interviews**

27 August 2009: Interview with Keith Ursel, Senior Programme Advisor for WFP Somalia.

28 August 2009: Interview with Oriano Micaletti, UNAMID Humanitarian Liaison.