Again at the Crossroads-Rwanda and Burundi, 2000 – 2001

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The political evolution of Rwanda and Burundi must be seen in a broader regional geopolitical context. The presence of the Rwandan and Burundian armies in the DRC is the expression of the extraterritorial extension of these countries civil wars. While the Burundian armed conflict runs parallel to very fragile negotiations, the Rwandan regime remains closed to any idea of political dialogue. The Burundian talks where the facilitator Nelson Mandela induced a forceps delivery, ended in August 2000 with the signature of an accord which is really a non-accord.

Its application meets with very considerable difficulties. During 2001, the option of total war was once again on the agenda and Burundi finds itself once more at the cross-roads. The Rwandan regime is confronted with increasingly threatening political challenges: these include the desertion of a number of Tutsi (former) RPF militants and officers of the RPA. The Rwandan and Burundian opposition movements attempt to seize the opportunities offered by the unstable nature of regional geopolitics: thus Uganda is preparing to join Congo as a base for the destabilisation of Rwanda.

While Burundi has experienced a considerable decrease in international aid over several years, the “genocide credit” which made Rwanda a “special case” to which political conditionality was not applied is nearing its end. The war waged in the DRC, the illegal exploitation of its resources, poor governance, growing isolation and the arrogant refusal of any dialogue are causing the “friends of the new Rwanda” to keep their distances and to threaten to become more severe. This sort of development may lead to an increasingly difficult economic situation in addition to the political impasse, especially if the rent derived from the illegal exploitation of the RDC were to dry up.

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