

The Humanitarian Complex and Challenges to the Justice Cascade

The Case of Ireland

Aid organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières are not the only entities devoted to the delivery of humanitarian aid. Countries and their governments may also focus on humanitarian aid policies, often in the context of development programs. Such governments may find themselves in a position similar to that of aid NGOs': they too have to take account of the government of the receiving country. In addition, donor governments often have strong organizational ties with domestic aid-oriented NGOs that may have deep roots in and a strong cultural resonance with the local population. Important for our purposes here, such constellations should affect how a donor country defines the situation in the receiving country, including the potential involvement of the receiving country's government in mass violence. Ireland, more than the other countries in our sample, approximates the ideal type of a humanitarian and development aid-oriented country. Among the eight countries included in this study, Ireland's aid budget is by far the highest as a percentage of the country's gross national income.¹ While Ireland is embedded in international organizations, especially the EU and the UN, and in important ways aligned with their policies, we should see the government's position in the aid field reflected in Irish representations of the mass violence in Darfur.

My description of Ireland is informed by two sources of data. The first is a content analysis of 242 articles, including 35 opinion pieces,

published in the *Irish Times*, the dominant Irish paper on issues of foreign affairs. I supplemented this set of quantitative data by correspondence with this paper's foreign correspondent and by an interview with a prominent Irish journalist of RTÉ, Ireland's public radio and television station who had reported from Darfur on several occasions.²

The second source of data is a set of interviews I conducted in Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). One respondent represented Irish Aid, the humanitarian and development aid branch of the foreign ministry.³ An energetic woman profoundly dedicated to her mission, she had entered the foreign service some fifteen years earlier after earning a degree in political science. She had worked on Northern Ireland issues, served as her government's humanitarian contact point to the UN in Geneva, and begun working on aid issues in the Dublin headquarters in 2004. She had visited Darfur in April 2005.

Two interview partners were located in the DFA's Political Division. The first, the head of the Africa desk, had had a long and distinguished career with the DFA. He had worked on EU external relations and served in the UN permanent mission in New York, among other assignments. He had degrees in English literature and economics and a master's in international public policy from a renowned private American university on the East Coast. The second interviewee, also from the Political Division, had been assigned to the Irish embassies of both Vienna and Tokyo and had been involved in the Northern Ireland talks. At the time of the interview, he was responsible for coordinating Ireland's role in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the European Union, with a special focus on Sudan and the Horn of Africa. His PhD thesis had focused on the history of Irish foreign policy.

IRISH FOREIGN POLICY AND HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT AID

Irish foreign policy makers express a pronounced orientation toward humanitarian and development aid. Not surprisingly, the respondent from Irish Aid articulated this stance most clearly. She reported that the Irish development and humanitarian aid program has a long history, dating back to religious missionaries "who would have gone to Africa and Asia in the nineteenth century." She also highlighted the "outward looking" nature of Ireland resulting from its emigration history. Despite Ireland's small size, such "strong roots" provide Irish policy makers

with “confidence of a lot of history behind the program.” Speaking of the current day and of Sudan in particular, she said:

A lot of our focus on Sudan was humanitarian. It doesn’t matter that you are a small donor when you have a humanitarian focus. You can play quite a large policy role or you can have quite a large profile if you are an honest broker—because we are neutral. . . . There would still be about two thousand missionaries whom we fund for their development work. There would also be NGOs whose roots would have been in the Catholic missions—Trócaire, for example; it means “mercy.” And they would be one of the big three Irish NGOs, and they would come from a Catholic ethos background.

In addition to Trócaire, described on its website as “the official development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland,”⁴ the interviewee referred to two other major Irish NGOs, Concern Worldwide⁵ and GOAL.⁶ Both are characterized as more secular, but, according to my interviewee, “GOAL would have done a lot of work over the years, again with the missionaries.”⁷

In line with this focus on aid policy, the interviewee’s response to my question about priorities in foreign policy goals is not surprising. Again, I offered four options: securing the survival of the affected, establishing peace, serving justice, and securing state sovereignty. While she saw these goals as lying on a “spectrum,” she insisted on the “humanitarian goal essentially as the first intervention. . . . If you assist people who are suffering, . . . that’s your sticking plaster.”

This position may not be surprising coming from a representative of the aid branch of the foreign ministry. Yet the aid mission was also mentioned frequently in my interview with the two officials from the Political Division. While seeing the four as a cluster of goals that would be reached successively, one respondent viewed the survival of the affected as an “immediate imperative for us, coming from the development and humanitarian perspective. But we recognize that you have to perceive that in tandem with securing peace and you cannot have peace in the absence of justice.” I return to the specific understanding of justice in greater detail below. Suffice it to say here that members of the Political Division, too, perceive the humanitarian goal as an immediate imperative.

The weight of the aid mission was further highlighted when I raised the issue of the peculiar status of Ireland’s foreign policy. While both of the Political Division representatives hastened to stress the Irish alignment in foreign affairs with positions taken by the European Union, they also insisted that they “would bring to discussions on Darfur a

particular humanitarian focus. . . . It would always be something we would raise, both the humanitarian needs of the population and the importance of maintaining humanitarian space for aid delivery. . . . That is because we have a particularly developed [humanitarian] policy compared to some other EU member states.”

COLLECTIVE MEMORY: CULTURAL SUPPORT FOR AID POLICY

Policy makers are mindful of the cultural traditions and historical experiences in which current Irish foreign policy is rooted. We have shown elsewhere elective affinities between collective memories and current-day policies, legislation, and implementation of laws (Savelsberg and King 2005, 2007). There we spelled out distinct mechanisms through which even a causal relationship may be established that leads from memories to legal forms. These mechanisms include analogical references to the past, historical consciousness that invites receptivity to commemorations of past events (King 2005; Olick and Levy 1997), and carrier groups that transport notions of the past while simultaneously speaking to contemporary issues (Weber 1978; Kalberg 1994, 2014). This argument builds on earlier work that recognizes how symbolic depictions of the past provide a cognitive and moral framework that can impel current policy. Symbols, after all, stand for larger ideas. They “evoke an attitude, a set of impressions, or a pattern of events associated . . . with the symbol” (Edelman 1985:6; see also Geertz 1973).

Ireland seems a prime example of the memory-policy link. Certainly an elective affinity can be found between Irish memories and the humanitarian orientation of Irish foreign policy. All interviewees are mindful of this affinity; indeed some believe in a causal relationship. In a first step, interviewees from the Political Division of the DFA highlighted relevant historical experiences that have been processed and incorporated into the collective memory. An extended segment of the interview, as it unfolded between the interviewer (JJS) and the two interviewees, A and B, is revealing:

A: I could hand you our aid report; it always recounts the missionaries that were first in Africa.

B: And missionaries in Africa experienced a famine in Ireland in the nineteenth century, and the population collapsed.

A: We identify with this kind of hardship strongly in Ireland.

JJS: Do you think this is just rhetoric, or is there a real base?

A: No, I think it can be quite visceral at times.

JJS: We see all over the city memorials for the famine.

B: Yep.

A: Exactly. I think the people have a memory of themselves as one that went through and died of the famine. . . . Many have relatives in the US etc. who are there as a consequence of the kind of deprivation that occurred in and after the famine. So it is quite a real historical memory in Ireland. It certainly would be a reason, amongst others, that you would support the development program.

B: Yep.

A: And even in our very severe economic straits—

B: Yeah. I was going to say that.

A: it has survived reasonably intact.

B: Local, not general, calls for cuts.

A: You will get—I mean, this is democracy—people who say the first thing we should be cutting is aid to others in dire straits. But it actually does not resonate very well.

B: It has strong popular support.

One of the interviewees concluded that the humanitarian aid focus of Irish foreign policy is not simply a choice made by a small group of officials, but that it finds support in Irish popular understanding of African conflicts: “It is firstly the humanitarian aspect, the extent to which people are actually being forced into dire poverty or facing death or insecurity.” Not only do such statements express the belief of policy makers in the Irish public’s memories and the resulting popular support for aid policy, but the very dynamic of this exchange also indicates the interviewees’ own identification with Irish collective memory and their sense that such memory motivates and legitimizes policies oriented toward humanitarian and developmental aid.

The same Irish collective memory was highlighted by my interviewee from Irish Aid, who sees the Irish humanitarian emphasis as supported by “the vulnerability that we trace back to our famine in the mid-nineteenth century, not specific to Sudan, I suppose, but any situation where food security is threatened, any situation where even the manifestation around the humanitarian crisis is around access to food and famine.”



FIGURE 13. The Famine Memorial in Dublin, Ireland.

A second, and related, aspect of Irish collective memory that respondents linked to foreign policy preferences is the nation's memory of British rule over Ireland, a point raised by the respondents in the Political Division: "Many Irish people would say we were the subject of colonization. . . . This is an important aspect of Irish identity to this day. . . . It would be very present in their [the Irish people's] sense of who they are." Accordingly, in one respondent's view, the Irish public strongly supported the decolonization movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The Irish public and policy makers also understood, in light of their country's history, that decolonization can be effective only if accompanied by economic development. Development, in fact, was seen as a prerequisite for peace and security.

While interviewees conceded that Ireland is not alone in its view that peace and security have to be coupled with aid programs, they insisted that this emphasis is especially strong in Irish foreign policy. It was in this spirit, they argued, that the foreign ministry established the aid and development program in the early 1970s as part of the Department of Foreign Affairs. "That has stayed as part of the way we have approached foreign policy in the last thirty years or so," one respondent said. "So it is intrinsic to our foreign policy approach."

STRUCTURAL SUPPORT FOR MEMORIES AND POLICIES:
THE HUMANITARIAN COMPLEX

Policy practices, guiding ideas, and associated collective memories co-exist in symbiosis with a field of supporting social and organizational relationships. Actors in this field include the government of Ireland, here specifically the DFA; the major Irish aid NGOs, in part associated with the Irish Catholic Church; Ireland's national news media, especially RTÉ; and the government of Sudan. In addition, the government of Ireland is embedded in a network of international relations, including relations with international organizations, especially the EU, the UN and its aid organizations, and the African Union (AU). I call this network of relationships the *humanitarian complex* and I now briefly sketch its structure as revealed in my interviews.

The first and perhaps central component of this network is a triangle consisting of the government of Ireland, Irish NGOs—partly in conjunction with the Irish Catholic Church—and the government of Sudan. The interviewee from Irish Aid spoke about NGOs whose roots are in the Catholic missions. As cited above, she highlighted Trócaire as the leading example, but she also points at Concern Worldwide and GOAL, the other two major Irish aid NGOs. While both are secular, GOAL also has a long tradition of working in close collaboration with Catholic missionaries. All three major Irish NGOs execute aid programs supported by the Irish DFA.

The tie between NGOs and the Irish government is further strengthened by regular consultations. One interviewee spoke about conferences: “We would generally bring in all of our Irish NGOs, our minister, and talk through a lot of the issues with them. . . . It works very, very well, and I think Darfur was probably one of the initial testing grounds for that type of approach.” While this interviewee recognized the NGOs’ interest in independence from the government, she insisted that they accept substantial ties nevertheless. An interviewee in the Political Division, when asked about sources of information about Darfur, replied: “Often we will hear, through an Irish NGO, the views of the Anglican bishops or the Catholic Church in Sudan.”

The government-NGO tie intensifies whenever the Irish government helps NGOs gain access to regions of need. Regarding Darfur, the Irish Aid interviewee explained: “They [NGOs] might also have discovered that we can be of some assistance. . . . In Darfur the issue was often around access, visas, and bureaucratic problems with the government

[of Sudan]. And we managed to solve a few of those problems over the years.” This ability to smooth the path for aid organizations depends of course on the relationship between the governments of the donating and receiving countries. The link between these countries thus constitutes the second tie in the initial triadic relationship within the humanitarian aid complex. It is strengthened, but also constrained, by Ireland’s focus on humanitarian aid. The Irish Aid interviewee explains how a humanitarian focus, in combination with an “honest broker role” and a sense of “neutrality,” substantially strengthens her country’s policy role vis-à-vis countries such as Sudan. In addition, government actors see reason for treading cautiously in light of Irish NGOs’ engagement in the conflict zone. Speaking about the much more restrained wording the Irish government used in its critique of Sudan, especially as compared to US rhetoric, the RTÉ journalist stated that the Irish government “was also tempered by the fact that there were so many Irish people down on the ground, working away, and a sense that organizations like GOAL were achieving a lot. So that wild political rhetoric might be one thing. But if you are looking after 180,000 people and you are looking after sixteen hospitals and medical centers around Khartoum, then you are doing something important.” He adds that, while Ireland cooperated with the EU to pursue peace and justice, the Irish foreign minister’s visits to Sudan were “more about providing support on the ground to the aid agencies, to enable them to afford as much help to the people who are in the difficulty. That would have been the focus. . . . You know, postindictment [of al-Bashir], GOAL, for example, was the only aid agency that was allowed to stay in North Darfur. Why was that? Because it had been there for thirty years and because it had not been seen as being overtly political.”

The humanitarian aid complex, the structural context in which ideas and policy programs are developed and memories regenerated, also includes Irish media, as indicated by the foregoing statement from a RTÉ journalist who had reported from Darfur. This interviewee highlights links between RTÉ on the one hand and Irish NGOs and the Irish government on the other:

Our team covered incidences in southern Sudan and the difficulties there, and Darfur had been off our radar. There was a report from a man called Walt Kilroy who was a former correspondent with RTÉ, who worked for an Irish aid agency called Trócaire. . . . He did a broadcast back to say “What’s happening here is incredible.” And that was one of the first sort of ringing the bell in the Irish context. . . . And then, by 2004, the Irish government

was beginning to make sense of it, primarily because we had agencies like GOAL. . . . It had a base in North Darfur. And then we had another organization called Concern Worldwide, and it had a base in [Darfur]. So there was a junior government minister, Tom Kitt, and he decided to go out and see what was going on. We had been trying to secure visas from the Sudanese government, but they were not in a position to give any guarantees of getting a filming license to travel to Darfur. So we jumped in the plane with the minister. That would have been in May 2004. And we flew into Khartoum, spent a couple of nights there, got an update from Mike McDonagh, who was of the UNOCHA [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs], and then we traveled to [several places throughout Darfur, including Al-Jenina, Nyala, Fashir, and the GOAL center in North Darfur]. So we were sending reports back for radio and television. . . . For him [Minister Tom Kitt] there was an awful lot of Irish aid agency involvement; there was a lot of Irish aid agency staff; there was a lot of Irish aid agency money. And I think it was probably . . . a combination of the minister's interest and NGOs wanting to have the political influence that goes with having the minister come in and sitting down with people and saying, "This is very important and can you afford protection to our people."

Pieces of information gained from interviews with the journalist and with DFA policy makers thus reinforce each other. They equally reveal network ties between the government of Ireland, Irish NGOs, Irish media, and the government of Sudan.

I should make clear, Irish foreign policy is not oriented toward the humanitarian aid field alone. Ireland is also firmly embedded in a network of international organizations. One central tie is with the European Union, and Irish foreign policy makers insist that their policies are aligned with EU policies. But EU institutions also allow Irish policy makers to focus on their chief concerns. Interviewees spoke of their engagement in the European Commission's aid-related institutions. They pointed, for example, to a formal humanitarian aid working group that met every four weeks. Instituted only after the height of the Darfur conflict, it was, however, preceded by regular information meetings that also addressed issues of aid to Darfur during the peak of the conflict. In this institutional context, EU special representative Rosalind Marsden was a regular addressee of Irish pleas that the EU keep its eyes on the suffering in Darfur.

Ireland's involvement in humanitarian aid issues also colors the ties it has with UN suborganizations. Respondents referred to Mike McDonagh, an Irish citizen working for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), specifically for the office in Sudan, who was appointed its head in 2007. McDonagh had moved

into this position after working for Concern Worldwide, the Irish NGO cited above, for thirty years. In addition to linking the Irish NGO tradition with UN work on Darfur, he also provided information for Irish journalists. The RTÉ interviewee characterized him as someone with “a wide experience of disaster conflict and the impact it has on people involved. So, he was a core [source of information].”

Irish foreign policy, finally, also maintains a mission to the African Union in Addis Ababa, as does the EU, and foreign policy interviewees in Dublin recognized and paid tribute to the AU’s increasing weight on the African continent.

In short, even a brief look at the field of Irish foreign relations reveals a network of actors that clusters around humanitarian and development aid and that includes members of the Political and Aid Divisions of the Department of Foreign Affairs, major Irish NGOs, the Catholic Church (with which one of these NGOs is closely affiliated), and Ireland’s public media. By necessity, members of this network who are responsible for organizing aid need to maintain working relationships with the government of Sudan or at least with some of its agencies. Just like aid NGOs, these actors depend on that government for visas, access to the region, and permits to operate in different regions of Sudan, including Darfur. And again, while Ireland is incorporated into various international organizations whose members bring diverse policy foci to the table, and while Ireland cannot be reduced to an aid perspective, its structural position, cultural orientation, and policy practices most closely approximate the ideal type of an aid-oriented country. Irish foreign policy is enabled and constrained by the institutional logic of the aid field, and the habitus of its actors reflects their identification with the aid mission.

In short, I found an elective affinity between Ireland’s policy orientation toward humanitarian and development aid; the collective memories that nourish that orientation and that are reproduced by it; and the structure of the Irish foreign policy field. This ensemble of social, cultural, and political forces is likely to color Ireland’s collective representation of the Darfur conflict, to which I now turn.

IRISH REPRESENTATIONS OF DARFUR

One of the interviewees in the Irish foreign ministry expressed a perspective that resembles Bourdieuan ideas about the knowledge-generating force of fields: “Perhaps it is an unusual situation that much of our

engagement in Africa is a development engagement. And that is a prism we see many African issues through.” To portray the Irish representation of the Darfur conflict, I again organize findings along the same set of dimensions used in the analysis of US news articles in chapter 3: suffering and victimhood; causes and origins of the conflict; actors; and framing. Here I draw on my interviews with Irish foreign policy makers and on the systematic content analysis of reporting on Darfur in the *Irish Times*, part of our Darfur media data set from eight countries. These data allow a comparative analysis of the particularities of Irish media reporting.

Suffering and Victimhood

As in the depictions of suffering encountered in documents and among interviewees from the aid NGO Doctors Without Borders, Ireland’s orientation toward humanitarianism in no way diminishes the acknowledgment of suffering. The Irish Aid interviewee cited the “one and a half million” people who were deprived of “basic human needs” such as “shelter, clean water, protection, food.” Despite her aversion to a deeper discussion of the causes of the conflict, she did add that this deprivation occurred in a context in which “insecurity was also overlaid on top of the deprivation of basic needs. . . . People were also living in an atmosphere of uncertainty and violence.” Yet she contrasted her organization’s efforts to “report dispassionately” with the “sensationalized” nature of media coverage. And, again, while she referred to Janjawiid “attacks on IDP camps and . . . attacks, if I recall correctly, in the first instance on villages,” she is reluctant to go into greater depth: “My focus was [more] on alleviating the suffering than necessarily on needing an entirely complete analysis of the perpetrators. Identifying the victim was certainly important; identifying who was suffering was very important, and targeting the needs of the population. In a complex emergency like that a lot of my focus would have been on that rather than saying the rights or wrongs of the situation.”

When asked about the number of victims, she cited the numbers typically published by the UN (200,000 dead). She added, though: “I’ve never seen any UN official report to say that all deaths were from attacks by either side. They were deaths because people were deprived of basic needs and services.” This focus on the causes of death associated with deprivation in IDP camps aligns with her humanitarian perspective.

Also, when commenting on the rape of women, she highlighted those incidents in which women left IDP camps to gather firewood, and she stressed the need for protection of these humanitarian aid settings. My questions regarding the degree and types of suffering, when directed at the interviewees from the Political Division, yielded little additional information.

Unlike the DFA interviewees, the RTÉ respondent spoke more directly to the violence in Darfur. While he insisted that journalists must report each actor's view of the situation, including the Sudan government's, he added that journalistic investigation would provide evidence that allowed the viewer or listener to form an independent judgment on the events:

In 2004 we were able to go to some of the villages that had been burnt down. . . . We were able to get people's firsthand accounts of how they spoke first about the bombings that happened from the air. Bombings from the air happen only one way—that is, through government support. And after that, men on horseback or camels or trucks came through. . . . They rounded up the men, raped the women. People were herded out. Everyone who was deemed to have been a problem was killed, and the place was erased to the ground.

This journalistic account demonstrates that media involvement in the network of the humanitarian aid field does not eliminate journalistic independence. The sentiment we encounter in this statement is certainly not cast in diplomatic or humanitarian caution. This interview finding is confirmed by our quantitative analysis. News reporting in Ireland generally did not downplay the suffering of the victims of Darfur. Figure 14.A shows that the *Irish Times* addressed killings in Darfur at about the same rate as the major newspapers in seven other Western countries. Rapes were reported even more frequently than elsewhere (figure 14.B). Putting this observation in perspective, I should add that rape was reported in the English-speaking countries at about double the rate in the French- and German-speaking ones. The overrepresentation of rape reports is actually less pronounced for Ireland than it is for the average reports of the United Kingdom, the United States, or Canada. Finally, and importantly, displacements were reported more often in the *Irish Times*, especially in opinion pieces, than in papers from the other seven countries (Figure 14.C).⁸ This is in line with the attention that humanitarian aid organizations directed at the very people who sought refuge in IDP or refugee camps.

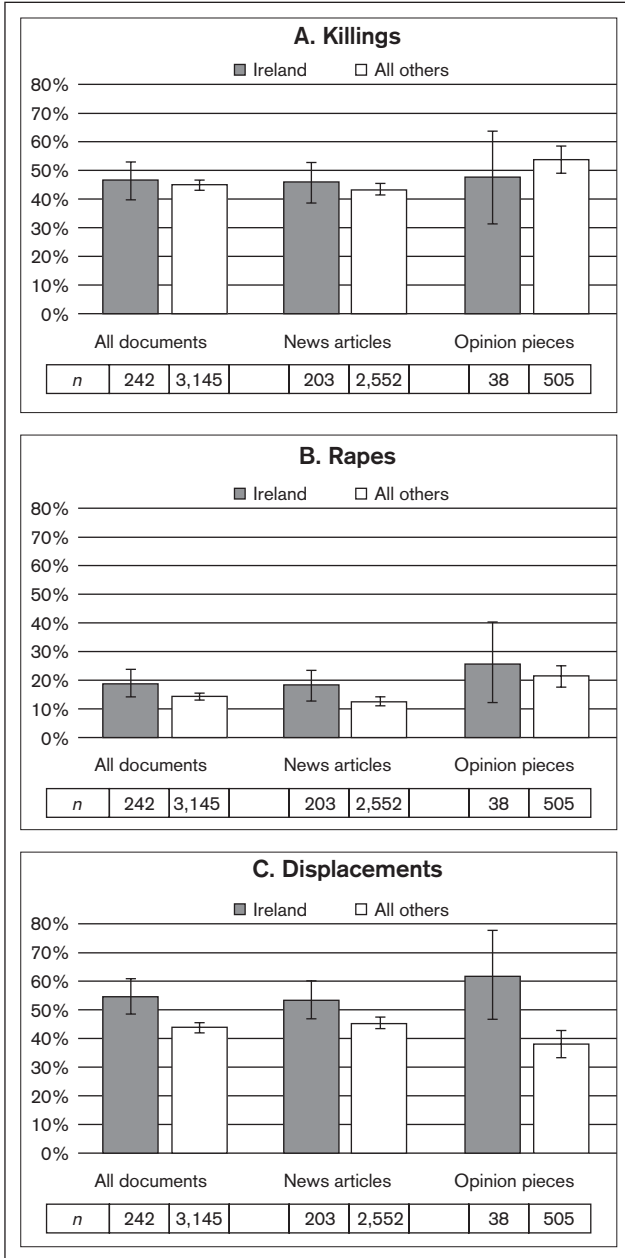


FIGURE 14. Percentage of Irish media documents that address killings, rapes, and displacements, compared to all other media documents.

Causes, Actors, and Frames

While Irish representations acknowledge the suffering in Darfur, the narrative related by the interviewee from Irish Aid already indicated some caution about implicating the Sudanese state as a perpetrator of violence. Differences between the aid policy depiction and the human rights representation become starker when we consider accounts about causes, responsible actors, and the framing of the violence.

One of the Political Division interviewees, when asked about the origins of the conflict and responsible actors, first spoke to the neglect of Sudan's periphery by its center. His colleague confirmed the center-periphery conflict and also commented on the destabilizing role of surrounding countries such as Chad, the rebel groups (JEM), and the Janjawiid, "supported by the Sudanese government." That latter comment notwithstanding, the interviewer implicated Khartoum less directly than the human rights narrative did: "At the earlier stages it was a highly complex conflict in which a variety of forces—be they supported from Khartoum, be they semi-resident in Chad, be they part of the Darfuri community itself—all were struggling to gain an advantage, keep territory, and undermine others. And within that there was no space for protecting citizens." When asked about responsible actors, the interviewees in the Political Division uttered neither names nor positions. Regarding the government of Sudan, one reasoned that it "arrived at a point where it has effectively either ungoverned or misgoverned spaces in its own country." The same respondent did, however, commend the ICC for having "done a good job in identifying those who carried out and supported certain atrocities." As in other instances of diplomatic speech, wherein institutions or individuals refuse to name names, referring to court decisions appears to be one acceptable way of indirectly hinting at responsible actors.

The Irish Aid interviewee responded with similar caution to my questions about causes and responsible actors. She referred to tribal conflict, "land degradation issues and climate issues that occurred over a fairly long period of time." Taking a shorter-term perspective, she said that the "SLA [Sudan Liberation Army, a rebel group] basically lost patience and . . . they felt that their side was being pushed around in terms of access to resources, and—at the rebel level—they decided that they were going to take up arms. You will see in anything you read about Darfur that the violence certainly emanated initially from the rebel side, but that it was the scale of the reaction by Khartoum that exacerbated the

whole situation.” While the respondent did not deny the escalating role of government actions, she focused on the rebels and their violent actions against the government as the initiators of the conflict. This line of argument is consistent with humanitarian programs’ need to maintain constructive relationships with the government of the receiving country.

Even the RTÉ journalist, who had used rather blunt words when asked about the victimization of the local population, expressed more caution in his responses to questions about the causes of the conflict and responsible actors. He too referred to “increasing desertification,” issues between “farmers and nomadic people,” the center-periphery conflict in Sudan, Chadian destabilization, and the inspiration rebels received from the apparent success of the southern rebellion in achieving an independent state. He supplemented such cautious speech, however, by pointing to the Janjawid, who either worked “hand in glove with the government” or were “a response to armed actions by the SLA.” But, then again, he insisted that “the situation is so much more complex and the conflict lines are so much less clearly drawn than it is sometimes presented.” He spoke of the “splintering of the armed opposition groups in Darfur,” mixed in with “banditry.” Talk about complexity is likely to reduce responsibility assigned leading state actors, and this interviewee made that point explicit in one additional statement: “You are either of the view that the president controls absolutely everything and if he wanted it [snaps fingers], it would happen right then. Or you are of the view that this is an area of disintegration, and that would be more my view.”

When asked about appropriate ways to frame the conflict, all respondents emphasized humanitarian catastrophe. Least surprisingly, the Irish Aid interviewee found the humanitarian perspective a “point of view that’s the most relevant. It’s an impact lens rather than a causality lens.” Also the interviewees in the Political Division and the journalist interviewee accepted this frame unambiguously. I received more mixed responses, on the other hand, when inquiring about the insurrection and civil war frames.

Responses to my inquiry about the appropriateness of applying a state crime frame to the violence in Darfur are of special interest, as I contrast the humanitarian with the human rights narrative. The interviewee from Irish Aid provided a somewhat meandering answer worth quoting:

I’m not a lawyer, and that has always troubled me a bit in terms of the likes of the ICC and how one attributes responsibility. I often feel people are very quick to judge a situation and draw conclusions. . . . There certainly seemed

to be plenty of anecdotal evidence, the likes of the media reportage around those burned villages. It could be said that there was a level of evidence of state involvement. . . . I suppose I prefer my focus to come across as being that my predominant interest in the situation was on the humanitarian portfolio and that, as a result, I am doing 99 percent of my work without needing to attribute responsibility. . . . It certainly did not escape my attention that it was not a clear-cut situation, because nothing in Sudan is. It is a very complex, opaque construct.

This response leads us from a reference to lawyers and the ICC as concerned with identifying responsible actors, to a cautious accusation of the Sudanese state, and finally back again to an insistence that identifying responsible actors is outside the jurisdiction of the Irish DFA, especially Irish Aid. Respondents in the Political Division are more openly critical of the Sudanese state, but they, too, express caution about the crime frame:

Clearly Sudan is not a failed or failing state, but for large parts of its territory it's at best a negligent state. . . . But, you know, criminal—some of the acts of the Sudanese government one could classify as criminal in terms of the use of violence against the population. But before it was criminal, it was negligent. But negligent is almost too benign because I think it's active negligence. . . . There is certainly a degradation of all facilities and rights and organization of the state that citizens would have some right to expect. And that, then, leads to the degree of not policing, allowing impunity, for example. At that point the law has virtually no meaning. It becomes a matter of interchange between tribes, and so that is what was allowed to develop, even going beyond “allowed to develop,” it was participated in by the Khartoum government.

This statement betrays much uncertainty as it refers to the Sudanese state alternately as a negligent state, an actively negligent state, and a state that engages in some acts that could be considered criminal.

Only the RTÉ journalist unambiguously embraced the state crime frame: “Absolutely. You cannot bomb villages and send troops through, or at least be aware of that happening, and not take steps to prevent that from happening.” He simultaneously rejects the notion of genocide: “In my reporting I never gave an opinion. . . . I wouldn't feel legally savvy enough. . . . That really is a matter for the courts.”

Our quantitative data, based on content analysis of reports about the Darfur conflict published in the *Irish Times*, reflects the sentiments that prevailed in the interviews. While the acknowledgement of suffering and victimization of the Darfuri population does not lag in Irish interviews and media reports, media messages are more cautious about citing the

crime frame. To be sure, as Figure 15.A shows, media reports do not shy away from referring to the violence as criminal. Yet they do so more cautiously than media from the seven other countries under examination. As in previous analyses, differences are more pronounced in opinion pieces than in news articles. The same pattern applies to media reports referring to the violence as a case of genocide (see figure 15.B).⁹ This again is not surprising, as genocide is generally treated with particular caution among those who seek not to dramatize the violence in Darfur.¹⁰

Skepticism about Criminal Justice

Irish reluctance to apply a state crime frame to the violence in Darfur suggests that support for a legal response, especially a criminal justice response, will be weak, at best. Given the experience with MSF interviewees, we should expect caution to be especially pronounced in interview statements by the respondent from Irish Aid. And, indeed, her responses do reflect considerable reservations about criminal proceedings in Irish foreign policy. While she did express some openness toward transitional justice in the broader sense of the term, she was skeptical about any role for criminal courts in the Darfur conflict:

I don't think Sudan would be alone if an impunity road was chosen. . . . I am not even sure you characterize it exclusively as impunity, do you? You've got your truth commissions, you got your amnesties. There are different positions taken by countries coming out of conflict. In the north of Ireland there is consensus on whether a truth and reconciliation commission is the right approach. There was effectively an amnesty in 1998, I think, for prisoners, for people who were already in prison for terrorist offenses. So that's not impunity per se. . . . You've seen lots of very interesting transitional justice processes in Africa, the likes of the *gacaca* in Rwanda, and you've had your truth and reconciliation commissions. And Sudan is so huge; it's not a monolith, it's not a homogeneous context. . . . [A pure criminal justice approach] would be a strong component if you can bring absolutely everybody who is responsible for anything to justice. But in the context where it is not quite so clear and where you look at how development is to be allowed to take place, I think you need a certain amount of creativity in terms of how you respond to peoples' justifiable need for some redress. But if the quality of their lives is not going to improve because you have made the issue two-sided again, . . . there is no likelihood that development gains will happen, because the situation is so polarized. It defeats the purpose of redress.

Respondents in the Political Division were more open to legal responses, but they too expressed some degree of doubt and prefer a

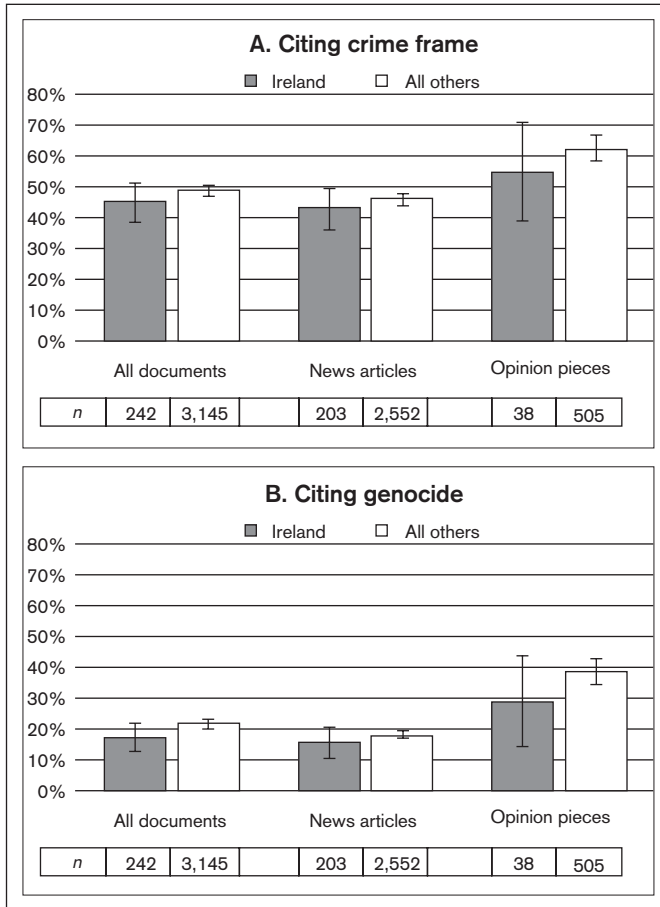


FIGURE 15. Percentage of Irish media documents citing the crime frame and using the genocide label, compared to all other media documents.

cautious approach. After having stated that development depends on peace and that there cannot be secure peace without justice, one interviewee continued: “The pursuit of justice in South Africa is a good example here. Justice needs to be part of the peace process and not allowed to become used as an obstacle to participation.” His colleague added that “the isolated pursuit of justice is possible, but it is likely to have considerable limitations in its effect if it is not accompanied by other aspects.” To be sure, the criminal justice process, especially ICC interventions, were not seen in an entirely negative light. Both interviewees in the Political Division agreed that ICC prosecution might

push President al-Bashir into a more conciliatory approach, that he may “recognize that a more responsive and a more responsible policy in relation to the South may mitigate the way he may be handled in the future or, who knows, he may hope it gets him off the hook entirely.”

The skepticism we encounter here toward a criminal justice response to Darfur is in line with the tension observed throughout this chapter between an aid approach and penal strategies. In addition, the Irish interviews reveal traces of collective memory that nourish such skepticism. This more recent memory to which my interviewees referred concerns the Northern Ireland conflict and the above lengthy statement of the Irish Aid interviewee speaks to that. Not accidentally, she had previously worked on Northern Ireland issues in the foreign ministry. She remembered that the situation was dealt with as a “terrorist situation” and that one “could have taken a very strong approach, which was done up until 1994. . . . And eventually everybody came to the conclusion that . . . neither side would win.” This memory of the Northern Ireland conflict is not free-floating, and it is not fully explained with a reference to carrier groups. Instead it is institutionalized within the political administration. Interview respondents in the DFA told me about a unit within the Political Division, set up with the goal of drawing lessons from the Northern Ireland experience and applying such lessons to conflicts globally. I encountered confidence that such lessons will become a major part of DFA humanitarian and development aid programming.

CONCLUSIONS: THE HUMANITARIAN COMPLEX AND ITS REPRESENTATIONS OF MASS VIOLENCE

This study of Ireland, a country with a strong humanitarian aid orientation, confirms and adds to insights from the previous chapter on humanitarian NGOs. For aid-oriented government actors, as for humanitarian aid organizations, the government of the receiving country is a major player in attempts to deliver assistance to suffering populations. This is also true when leaders of that government are charged with grave crimes by the ICC or any other court. In fact, the situation for countries with aid-oriented foreign policies is more complex than that for INGOs. In the case of Ireland, the government itself is tied into a field I have termed a humanitarian aid complex. It involves major NGOs, partly affiliated with the Catholic Church; the governments of the donating and receiving countries; and even media organizations of the donating country.

And, as in the case of MSF, the representation of the mass violence in Darfur takes a particular shape, quite distinct from that of the human rights field. Again, there is no denial of suffering. In the humanitarian complex, too, the pain and deprivation of the population in areas of conflict are documented and communicated to a world audience. Yet here, as in the case of INGOs, those aspects of suffering are stressed that can be addressed by humanitarian aid programs. The depiction of displacements and the deprivation suffered in IDP or refugee camps trumps that of mass killings by the military and their affiliated militias. And again, critique of the government of Sudan is more muted than that encountered in the human rights field. In line with such caution, the humanitarian emergency frame is privileged over the state crime frame.

The elective affinity identified between the humanitarian aid field and the specific representation of the violence by aid actors clearly involves causal ties. As they depend on the cooperation of the Sudanese state to grant visas and permits to travel and deliver aid, humanitarian actors exercise caution with regard to the government of Sudan. This argument is further strengthened when actors in this field include religious organizations such as the Catholic Church in Ireland. Amnesty interviewees in Germany likewise indicated that the public understanding of the Darfur conflict was inspired by the country's major churches and was oriented more toward a humanitarian catastrophe than toward a criminal accountability model.

The Irish case of the humanitarian complex, like that of MSF, thus approximates an ideal-typical depiction of a humanitarian catastrophe in the aid field. But the lesson is broader. Elsewhere, using advanced statistical analysis, we confirmed that the patterns identified for Ireland apply across countries with varying foci on humanitarianism (Savelsberg and Nyseth Brehm 2015). In other words, the more a country is invested in humanitarian aid, the more likely will its media subscribe to a narrative dominated by humanitarian concerns. Note further that Ireland only approximates a humanitarian ideal type. Even here, the country's aid-oriented focus is partly neutralized by its membership in international organizations that represent a wider range of policy preferences. Global and international scripts, too, matter to Irish policy makers, in line with the World Polity School. Yet the stress, common in historicizing branches of neo-Weberianism, on national carrier groups and cultural sensitivities finds especially strong support in the case of Ireland.

How, then, are humanitarian representations communicated to global society? Before turning to this question, part III examines another field whose representation of mass violence may conflict with that generated in the context of the justice cascade: diplomacy and foreign policy and their the construction of narratives about the Darfur conflict.