



# The State of Peacebuilding in Africa

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## Lessons Learned for Policymakers and Practitioners

Edited by  
**Terence McNamee**  
**Monde Muyangwa**

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## The State of Peacebuilding in Africa

“On the 50th anniversary of the Organization of African States (OAU) in 2013 the Africa Union (the OAU reborn) pledged itself to creating a conflict-free Africa. That aspiration still remains unrealized, and this study explains why. In looking back at the past 50 years of the continent’s history it identifies why Africa is still conflict-prone; in looking to its future it explains what still needs to be done to redeem the AU’s pledge. Written by practitioners as well as academics this is an important work that is constructive in its recommendations, and written in an authoritative and engaging style. This study doesn’t pull its punches. It also carries a warning by its editors that good intentions are not enough; unfortunately, they are all too often supported by unintended consequences.”

—Professor Christopher Coker, *Director, London School of Economics, IDEAS*

“‘The State of Peacebuilding in Africa’ is a sophisticated *tour de force* of recent scholarship on the conceptual, practical and regional aspects of peacebuilding and peacemaking across contemporary Africa. The volume adroitly questions traditional approaches to peacebuilding in the complex and evolving milieu within which African countries operate, and offers a fresh look at how the economic, social, political and cultural factors interact in complex emergencies. The authors use a range of thematic angles and case-study examples to explore and articulate innovative, evidence-driven options for policy wonks and policy makers. This book will bring as much richness to the classroom and project whiteboard, as it would to boardroom.”

—Raymond Gilpin, Ph.D., *Chief Economist and Head of Strategy, Regional Bureau for Africa, UNDP New York*

“Far from a period in which narrations of conflict and peacebuilding in Africa were done predominantly by distant spectators and ‘beholders of peace’, this book signals a shift by projecting African-led ideas. Not only does it bring authentically African voices to the fore, it offers African peacebuilding perspectives in a global context. It also privileges first-hand accounts of policy practitioners as well as experts that have engaged meaningfully with peacebuilding processes and activities on the ground in Africa. The editors succeed in connecting the world of academia with that of policy and practice; and they offer a useful model of collaboration among authors from the global North and South while maintaining the prominence of the African accounts at the core of the book. This is a bold attempt to shift perspectives of peacebuilding in Africa from those that are based

on the gaze of distant actors to those which reflect the worldviews of the real ‘owners of peace’.”

—Professor Funmi Olonisakin, *Vice President & Vice-Principal International Professor of Security, Leadership & Development, King’s College London and Advisory Group of Experts, for the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture (2015)*

“Thorough, informative, insightful, and inspiring, this important collection brings together an impressive and diverse set of authors to reflect upon the progress that has been made in peacebuilding in Africa and the challenges that remain. The authors provide an incisive analysis of existing tensions, such as the mismatch between pan African ideals of self-reliance and the continent’s heavy dependence on external funding, but they also offer practical and timely suggestions on how to improve peacebuilding approaches and practices. This book will be essential reading for policymakers and students interested in efforts to support and uphold peace on the continent.”

—Devon E. A. Curtis, Ph.D., *Senior Lecturer, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Emmanuel College*

“Drawing on the experiences and expertise of established Africanists, *The State of Peacebuilding in Africa* delves eloquently into 30-year peacebuilding experience in Africa exploring peacebuilding in transition in Africa; appropriate strategies and tools; regional and international dimensions; and country/region case studies before shedding important lights on key lessons and recommendations. The editors do an outstanding job of fleshing out the conceptual, methodological and paradigmatic issues in the face of complex conflict, peace and security challenges in Africa, while the contributors deliver well-rounded and mature contributions. This book offers timely and stimulating perspectives on the quest for peace in Africa. It presents compelling new insights on the important, yet sometimes overlooked, symbiotic relationships among peace, security and development. *The State of Peacebuilding in Africa* provides scholars, policymakers, and other stakeholders studying and working on African issues with innovative solutions, strategies, knowledge, insights and analyses to support decision-making on how best African leaders should embark on peacebuilding on their continent.”

—Mathurin C. Houngnikpo, Ph.D., *Independent Scholar, and former Professor, Civil-Military Relations, Africa Center for Strategic Studies*

“Very few books provide as broad and deep a set of reflections and considerations regarding peacebuilding in Africa, as this volume. The issues and case studies covered here offer much for the future of policymaking in this area.”

—David J. Hornsby, *Associate Vice President of Teaching and Learning and Professor, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, Canada*

Terence McNamee · Monde Muyangwa  
Editors

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*Editors*

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ISBN 978-3-030-46635-0

ISBN 978-3-030-46636-7 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46636-7>

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The research for this book was made possible by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York. The views and statements expressed in this book are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not represent the views of the Wilson Center or the Carnegie Corporation of New York.



This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*This book is dedicated to the memory of Steve McDonald and Congressman Howard Wolpe, former directors of the Africa Program at the Wilson Center, for their dedication and commitment to peace in Africa.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book came to life out of the Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding (SVNP), a pan-African network of organizations that works with the Wilson Center to bring African knowledge and expertise to inform policymaking on peacebuilding in Africa. We are deeply grateful to all of the member organizations and their dedicated scholars and practitioners who make up this network. This volume would not have been possible without the SVNP's relentless commitment to building peace in Africa.

Many people contributed to the successful development of this book, which is being published at a time of extraordinary global disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We would firstly like to thank the chapter contributors to this book who have been unfailingly generous with their time during the long and arduous journey of bringing this international compendium to print, especially given the unprecedented circumstances which have marked the end of this journey. We are grateful that you stayed the course with us and produced such extraordinarily rich contributions to this subject. We would also like to thank the Wilson Center Africa Program staff, past and present, who helped with the production of this book. We are especially grateful to: Hannah Akuiyibo, Ian Gorecki, Shahrazad Hired, and Gamuchirai Mhute; former staff Deborah Carey; and Africa Program interns, Rosa Ennison, Stephanie Lizzo, and Emily Michels for their hard work and invaluable research, administrative, and contract support that were essential to keeping this book on track. Thank you for your commitment to the Africa Program and all that you do

to support its mission. It is a privilege to work with you. Thank you also to Sue Howard, Deputy Chief Financial Officer and the Financial Management team at the Wilson Center as well as Lauryn Guttenplan, Deputy Legal Counsel at the Smithsonian Institution, for their support and guidance in navigating the legal and financial requirements necessary to publish this book and to ensure that it would be accessible to as many people as possible via Open Access. Also at the Wilson Center, a special note of thanks to Robert Litwak, Vice President for Scholars and Programs, for his unwavering and uplifting support throughout this project. At Palgrave Macmillan, we are grateful to Alina Yurova for her work in leading the project and, in the latter stages of production, Rachel Moore, and Anne-Kathrin Birchley-Brun, who assisted skillfully and always with great timeliness. I would be remiss in not acknowledging my co-editor, Terence McNamee—thank you for your hard work, focus, and dogged determination on pushing the book forward to successful publication, and for being such a joy to work with, including and especially when the deadlines got tight. To David Kaloustian and Inonge Kaloustian, thank you for your support throughout this project.

Finally, we would like to thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY), whose commitment to global peace and security, generous financial support, and wise counsel made possible both the Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding and the research for this book. In particular, we would like to thank Andrea Johnson, Aaron Stanley, and Stephen Del Rosso for their vital support for, and faith in, the Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding and this book project. We hope this book is part testimony of your investment and belief in Africa and its future.

To all of you, I offer a deep and heartfelt *Zikomo* (thank you) for bringing this book to life.

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PART I

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## Peacebuilding in Transition



## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction

*Terence McNamee and Monde Muyangwa*

The birth year of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), 1963, is often considered Africa's year of independence. But political freedom did not mean freedom from the repression and violence which had characterized the colonial period. Wars and conflicts have scarred the continent since independence. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, they became more complex and widespread. And so, too, did the international efforts to restore and (re) build peace in Africa. Countries worst affected by violence and conflict included Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan/South Sudan, Central African Republic, Mali, and Libya. In recent years, the quest for sustainable peace in Africa has taken on a new urgency, as instability and insecurity continue

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to negatively impact the lives of millions of Africans and hinder the continent's economic growth and development. This book joins the quest for peace by examining 30 years of peacebuilding in Africa, highlighting key lessons learned and offering some recommendations for making peace stick.

In 2013, the Heads of State and Governments of the African Union (AU) signed the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration. To mark a half-century since the formation of the OAU, forerunner to the AU, leaders committed to work for peace and prosperity and end strife on the continent by 2020.

Our determination to achieve the goal of a conflict-free Africa, to make peace a reality for all our people, and to rid the continent of wars, civil conflicts, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters, and violent conflicts, and to prevent genocide, We pledge not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans, and undertake to end all wars in Africa by 2020.<sup>1</sup>

Presumably, none of the signatories genuinely believed that such an ambitious target could be achieved within seven years. In the period since the founding of the OAU, more than half of African states experienced some form of major conflict. Many of those states had reverted to war after periods of relative peace. The signatories knew that. Most were in their 60s or older in 2013; they had lived through some of Africa's bleakest times. Today, the continent cannot be described as "conflict-free."

At the same time, Africa has progressed further down the path of peace than is typically portrayed. State fragility remains an endemic problem across the continent, but incidents of mass violence are increasingly rare. This is in no small part due to African states shedding the tactics of their former colonial masters and taking ownership of the problems within their own borders. As one of our contributors observes, Africa has

...exhibited a notable readiness to assume the tasks of crisis management and engage in mutual cooperation between states to rebuild stability, through diplomacy, negotiation and the deployment of intervention forces and peacekeepers. The continent's capacity for common action is one of its greatest strengths.<sup>2</sup>

To add weight to the AU's Solemn Declaration, its leaders adopted the "Silencing the Guns" initiative, one of the flagship projects of the wider developmental blueprint "Agenda 2063." The campaign seeks to make

2020 a year of action and mobilization, inspiring all stakeholders to prioritize efforts on peace and effective socio-economic development.

By fitting coincidence, this book is published in the same year—a year which will be forever linked not (seemingly) with peace and security but, instead, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disrupted life in previously unthinkable ways across all continents. The quest to silence the guns, and build peace and security in Africa, will continue long after this pandemic passes. We hope that this book’s insights and lessons will make a small contribution to that goal.

## THE STATE OF PEACEBUILDING IN AFRICA

*The State of Peacebuilding in Africa* looks back on over 30 years of key experiences across numerous aspects of peacebuilding and highlights key lessons learned that could be used to entrench sustainable peace on the continent.

Building on the research and activities of the Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding (SVNP)<sup>3</sup>—a continent-wide network of 22 African civil society, policy, research, and academic organizations that works with the Wilson Center’s Africa Program to bring African knowledge, analyses, and perspectives to U.S., African, and international policy on peacebuilding in Africa—this volume brings together the work of distinguished African and international practitioners, scholars, and decision makers.

Peacebuilding is a complex and multifaceted endeavor, consisting of many different elements. While some elements are not covered as fully as others, most of the core themes are included in this book: conflict prevention and early warning systems; mediation and conflict management; post-conflict reconstruction; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR); human rights and justice; and the role of women, religion, humanitarianism, grassroots organizations, and regional and continental bodies. The thematic chapters are complemented by six country and region case studies on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan/South Sudan, Mozambique, and the Sahel/Mali.

The chapter authors were given a common template to work from and asked to address three main questions in the peacebuilding realm in Africa since the end of the Cold War: What changes have occurred in thinking and practice at the thematic or country level? What have been the key lessons learned (good and bad) and best practices to emerge from them? And, what are the top policy options or recommendations you would

put forward to policymakers and practitioners working on this aspect of peacebuilding?

In some respects, of course, this is well-trodden territory. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 coincided with changing dynamics of conflict across the world, not least in Africa. A rich literature on peacebuilding arose in this new era—as much out of hope that historic fault-lines might be bridged as fear that states were not equipped to deal with the new threats to peace and stability. The colossal challenges and failings of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping in the 1990s, especially in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia (Srebrenica), led to the landmark “Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations” (informally known as the Brahimi Report), published in 2000, which outlined the need for enhancing the UN’s capacity to undertake a wide variety of missions. It was followed five years later by the UN Secretary-General’s Report “In Larger Freedom,” which emphasized the synergistic relationship of development, security, and human rights in building peace. More recently, the Independent High-level Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) was convened in 2014 by the then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. His thorough review of UN peace operations and the emerging needs of the future, published the following year, popularized the idea of “the primacy of politics.” By which the report meant not that UN missions could end conflict and build peace alone, but that their success rested on being part of a “viable process.” Many of the themes addressed in this volume can be understood as key parts of such a process.

With ever-deeper attention given to conflict resolution by the UN, governments, and the academic community, robust debates have arisen over what terms and definitions fit realities on the ground best. This is not merely an academic concern: the lack of a common vocabulary can fatally undermine peace missions. Where there is vagueness and confusion over terms, one of the book’s contributors writes, contrasting interpretations of mandates by different national contingents in peace operations can always arise.

The concept of “peacebuilding” has been, to say the least, variously defined. For some, it is one of several distinct activities including: conflict prevention and mediation (e.g., early warning and urgent diplomatic measures); peacemaking (e.g., high-level envoys and summits); peace enforcement (e.g., violent and nonviolent coercive measures), and post-conflict reconstruction (including justice, institution-building, and economic development). All of which, in their own way, contribute to

international peace and security. And then there are peacekeepers, who are increasingly mandated—or at least find themselves working—across different realms: protecting civilians, delivering humanitarian assistance, helping to restore the rule of law, even engaging in de facto reconstruction and state-building. Others use the term “peacebuilding” in an instrumental sense: the means to institutionalize peace, and remove the root causes of conflict.

For the purposes of this volume, peacebuilding is understood in a broad sense, an umbrella term that encompasses the activities highlighted above and some others. If a more precise definition is required, perhaps it is worth recalling another important UN document, Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s *Agenda for Peace* published in 1992, which describes the concept of peacebuilding as

the construction of a new environment... which seeks to avoid the breakdown of peaceful conditions. [Only] sustained, cooperative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems can place an achieved peace on a durable foundation. Preventive diplomacy is to avoid a crisis; post-conflict peacebuilding is to prevent a recurrence.<sup>4</sup>

With a lens on Africa, this definition provides a reasonably accurate frame for the book.

In a growing and increasingly globalized literature on peacebuilding, what sets this volume apart from most others is the amalgam: of contributors from the grassroots and academia, from the practitioner and policymaking worlds; of African and non-African voices. There is richness to this mix. While this book, and the Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding, the initiative that gave rise to it, privileges African voices, it also includes leading thinkers from outside the continent who have studied and interrogated peacebuilding, and helped shape peacebuilding policies and concepts in Africa.

## KEY ISSUES AND THEMES IN PEACEBUILDING IN AFRICA

One of the contributors, *Ibrahim Gambari*, a Nigerian former military leader and scholar-diplomat, brings a wealth of high-level experience outside Africa—as a UN Special Envoy to conflict-scarred states like Cyprus and Myanmar—to his reflection on how to build sustainable peace in his home continent. Others, like former government minister *Betty*

*Bigombe*, draw on years as a mediator in her native Uganda—experience that included face-to-face negotiations with Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)—together with time spent at think tanks and the World Bank to explain why policies on the reintegration of ex-combatants into communities need a rethink. *Vera Songwe*, current Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and a leading African economist and banking executive, draws on the lessons learned from World War One and Two to argue for earlier sequencing of economic development within peacebuilding frameworks, and for revisiting the role of multilateral institutions.

Readers of this volume will invariably pick up on certain issues that percolate across the thematic chapters and case studies. As you progress through *The State of Peacebuilding in Africa*, these are some of the recurrent themes that we think merit closer scrutiny.

1. **Frameworks.** Frequently peacebuilding frameworks are out of sync with realities and needs on the ground. Too often this is due to too numerous, various, and uncoordinated—however well-meaning—“partners.” Nor do “one-size-fits-all” approaches work; context matters. Post-conflict reconstruction approaches tend to focus on rebuilding the state while neglecting the reconstruction and healing of the people traumatized by conflict. Both are necessary.
2. **Mandates and Missions.** Overloaded mandates—often a laundry list of tasks without commensurate resources in terms of personnel, finances, or logistics—compromise peacebuilding outcomes. Additionally, the growing number of blurred missions—e.g., between humanitarian missions and military peace support operations—is problematic.
3. **Funding.** Being overly reliant on external/non-African donors to fund peacebuilding renders key programs vulnerable and unsustainable, as resources are often short-term while peacebuilding needs are long term in nature.
4. **Civil Society, Grassroots, and Elites.** Wars are ended by elites; peace is built and sustained at the grassroots. Peace Agreements and peacebuilding efforts need to better reflect that reality, including on matters of transitional justice and on the role played by religion and local infrastructures for peace in African societies. Simply put, local ownership matters and is key to building peace.

5. ***Women’s Voices.*** Peace cannot be realized or sustained if women’s voices are not included in peacebuilding processes or if issues of sexual and gender-based violence are not addressed within peacebuilding efforts.
6. ***Youth.*** Despite recurrent claims to the contrary by leaders and mediators, young Africans are regularly excluded from peace processes. It is still common for youth to be perceived as potentially dangerous “factors” in peacebuilding, easily manipulated to further one or other side’s interests. In reality, young people have agency and are not monolithic actors. They have tremendous potential for driving positive change in Africa where, not infrequently, stale gerontocracies dominate. That soon a quarter of the young people in the world will be African amplifies the need to reimagine the role of youth in peacebuilding.
7. ***Institutions matter: International, African Union, and Regional Economic Communities.*** Peacebuilding achievements should be recognized and built upon. In some cases, core institutions need to revisit their dogmatic approach to peacebuilding. In other cases, the right institutions and processes are in, or being put in place; they just need to be more effective and realized.
8. ***Expectations.*** Peacebuilding is a long-term process, subject to reversals. Potential points of failure are numerous. Too often populations are promised miracles and panaceas. When these do not materialize, resentment can fuel a return to war. Similarly, the international community often expects a sustainable peace but is usually unable or unwilling to make the long-term investment necessary to transform conflict-prone societies.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

This book is divided into four parts: (i) peacebuilding in transition in Africa; (ii) strategies and tools; (iii) regional and international dimensions; and (iv) country/region case studies.

Part I focuses on the evolution of peacebuilding and begins with a reflection by *Paul Williams* on more than fifty peace operations deployed to nearly twenty African countries during the twenty-first century. He outlines why peace operations need to be part of a viable strategy of conflict resolution and explains what happens when means and ends

are not aligned. Of particular note is his warning that a numbers-centric approach to force generation in peace operations is far less effective than a capabilities and effects-based approach. *Vera Songwe* looks at the economic dimension of peacebuilding reflecting on the failures and successes of international organizations during the first half of the 20th century. She questions the established approach of engaging in economic development only after peace has been restored. This approach, she argues, condemns peacebuilding to failure even before it has started. *Ludovic Lado* examines a vital but under-appreciated factor in the success or failure of peacebuilding: religion. Against a complex and evolving religious landscape, where Christianity and Islam coexist alongside African traditional religions, *Lado* explores the intersection of secular and faith-based processes of peacebuilding, with particular reference to the marginalized role of Muslim-based initiatives. In her chapter on the social imperatives of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), *Betty Bigombe* draws heavily on her leadership experience of DDR initiatives in Uganda and Burundi, highlighting the myriad ways in which greater attention to war's forgotten noncombatants is essential to heal societies, foster reconstruction and development, and prevent a recurrence of conflict. Similarly, drawing on his own vast experience of UN-led peacekeeping operations in Africa, *Ibrahim Wani* discusses missions' engagement on issues related to human rights and the protection of civilians. He argues that insufficient political support and overloaded peacekeeping mandates have led to a situation in which human rights and the protection of civilians are not prioritized as highly as they should be. It is thus essential, *Wani* observes, for the UN and its member states to move beyond rhetoric to genuine implementation of the HIPPO framework.

The chapters in Part II explore some of the main tools and strategies used in African peacebuilding. *Lisa Sharland* provides a seemingly obvious but necessary reminder: peacebuilding is less likely to succeed without the participation and consideration of women. In a detailed review of two contrasting cases, Liberia and South Sudan, she reveals some of the challenges and opportunities that UN engagement has offered in terms of advancing equality and women's security in each country. As overlooked as women, historically, local peace committees have made enormous contributions to peacebuilding in Africa, as *Fritz Nganje* explains. His chapter charts the recent "local turn" which has given rise to diverse forms of grassroots peacebuilding initiatives.

Returning to DDR, *Anatole Ayissi* finds that in the vast majority of Africa's conflict-affected societies, reintegration remains the Achilles Heel of DDR programs; only a minority of ex-combatants are sustainably reintegrated into their communities. He calls for a strengthening of Africa's ownership of DDR programs, endowing regional institutions with more capacity, expertise, and resources. The thorny subject of African elections is the focus of *Franklin Oduro*'s chapter. He explains why elections, particularly ones that transition societies from autocracy to democracy, are one of the central pillars of peacebuilding in Africa. His chapter concludes with some provisional ideas for mitigating the "winner-takes-all" ethos and other potential triggers for election-related violence in Africa. The last chapter of Part II assesses the contribution of early warning systems to the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), with reference to the experience of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). The authors *Chukwuemeka Eze* and *Osei Baffour Frimpong* argue that WANEP's work on early warning—and conflict-related early warning systems in general—will not be able to fulfill its potential without reforms in the areas of funding, partnerships with civil society organizations, and closing the chasm between early warning and early response.

Part III highlights the varied regional and international dimensions to African peacebuilding. *Gilbert Khadiagala* commends the African Union for the significant strides the organization has made in building norms around peace, security, stability, and governance, but warns of tremendous obstacles to realizing the vision and objectives articulated in its Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy. He urges national ownership of peacebuilding as well as a deepening and advancing of normative frameworks among various stakeholders. At the Regional Economic Community (REC)-level, the role of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in attempting to lay the groundwork for peaceful transformation in its region is the subject of *Dimpho Deleglise*'s chapter. In reviewing the cases of SADC mediation and involvement in Lesotho, Madagascar, and Zimbabwe, she explains why the organization has been singularly unable to fulfill its long-term agenda for sustainable peace. *Phil Clark* examines the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its intersections with two widespread domestic conflict resolution processes in Africa: national amnesties and peace negotiations. In doing so, he connects to two overarching scholarly and policy debates, namely the appropriateness and legality of amnesties as opposed to prosecutions for suspected perpetrators of international crimes, and

the “peace versus justice” debate over whether the threat of prosecution imperils peace negotiations that involve high-level atrocity suspects. A practitioner’s perspective on the changing role of humanitarian organizations in Africa’s conflict zones is provided by *Jens Pedersen*. He traces how humanitarianism has become a highly contested space on the battlefield, where principles of humanitarian relief have been undermined by the major powers and the UN in their pursuit of ostensibly noble objectives. A different kind of firsthand perspective is offered by *Ibrahim Gambari*. His focus is the prevention and mediation of conflicts, drawing on his experience as a senior UN envoy to several conflict zones around the world. His is a global view on lessons learned for peacebuilding in Africa against the backdrop of fundamental shifts in the nature of conflict since the end of the Cold War.

Part IV of the book captures some of the above peacebuilding themes in several country and region studies. *Rachel Sweet* tackles one of the continent’s most complex and conflict-prone states, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in a comparative look at two major intervention attempts of the UN Peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in different theaters of conflict in North Kivu: one that was seen as a success (against the M23 rebellion, 2012–2013), and the other a failure (against the Allied Democratic Forces [ADF] rebellion, 2014–present). In his detailed account of Mozambique’s decades-long, often fraught peacebuilding journey, *Alex Vines* examines the diverse initiatives—from financial and diplomatic to the contribution of church-based mediation and grassroots initiatives for justice and reconciliation—that brought the ruling FRELIMO party and RENAMO to a negotiated settlement, against a backdrop of changing regional and international dynamics. *Adekeye Adebajo* sets out in his chapter to solve a mystery: why has Sierra Leone remained relatively stable 14 years after peacekeepers left the country in 2006, and 18 years after the end of a devastating 11-year civil war in which an estimated 70,000 people died? In doing so, he explains, Sierra Leone has defied the fate of so many fragile and conflict-prone states. The main departure point of *Jok Maduk Jok*’s chapter on Sudan/South Sudan is that, common to most protracted conflicts that relapse into war, there was a profound disconnect between elites and local communities in the once-unified Sudan and subsequently in the two separate countries. Drawing heavily on the apparent failures of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), he asserts that African conflict resolution and peacebuilding

relies too heavily on political agreements between politico-military elites. *Terence McNamee* outlines why Rwanda, a relatively unknown country until 1994, divides opinion among scholars and commentators as perhaps no other state in Africa, if not the world, does. Is it a development success, rising from the ashes of mass ethnic slaughter? Or a case of autocratic recidivism, masked by a bogus narrative of national unity? This chapter tries to find a balance in Rwanda's highly contested peacebuilding journey. The last chapter, by *Paul Melly*, tracks the evolution of local and international efforts to contain the multifaceted threats to peace and security in the Sahel—threats that have become more serious over the past 15 years, despite a steady reinforcement of the national, regional, and international campaign to stabilize the region.

It is our hope that in addressing peacebuilding in Africa from such varying angles and perspectives, this book surfaces insights and lessons that are useful for strengthening the understanding and practice of peacebuilding in Africa.

## NOTES

1. See <https://au.int/en/documents/20130613/50th-anniversary-solemn-declaration-2013>.
2. See Paul Melly, Chapter 22 in this book.
3. The Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding was established in 2011, and is generously funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. More information about the SVNP can be found here: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/the-southern-voices-network-for-peacebuilding>.
4. See A/47/277-S/24111 June 17, 1992, ‘An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping’, the Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on January 31, 1992.

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## CHAPTER 2

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# Learning Lessons from Peace Operations in Africa

*Paul D. Williams*

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter reflects on the experiences of more than fifty peace operations deployed in Africa during the twenty-first century in order to identify some of the most important generic lessons and potential new approaches that have emerged. These peace operations varied across several dimensions with each mission operating in a distinct set of circumstances to achieve a unique set of mandated tasks. Consequently, any attempt to draw generic lessons without a concomitant focus on mission-specific lessons should not be treated as definitive. Nevertheless, there is some value in trying to move beyond mission-specific analysis and draw broader conclusions, as this chapter seeks to do.

For the purposes of this chapter, I define peace operations broadly as the expeditionary use of uniformed personnel (troops, military observers/experts, and police), with or without a United Nations (UN)

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mandate, but with an explicit mandate to assist in the prevention of armed conflict by supporting a peace process; serve as an instrument to observe or assist in the implementation of ceasefires or peace agreements; or enforce ceasefires, peace agreements, or the will of the UN Security Council in order to build stable peace.<sup>1</sup> This excludes what the UN calls “special political missions” as well as “collective defense operations” (such as the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia in 2006) and humanitarian military interventions (such as the NATO-led operation in Libya in 2011).

This chapter starts by providing an overview of the main trends in peace operations in Africa focusing on the record number of missions and peacekeepers deployed; the wide range of mandated tasks given to them; the prominence of civilian protection issues; the intensifying debates over the use of force; and the rise of “partnership peacekeeping.” The second section summarizes the major generic lessons that can be identified from these operations. These include the need to ensure peace operations are part of a viable political strategy aimed at conflict resolution; that means and ends are in tune; that a capabilities and effects-based approach to force generation is superior to a numbers-centric approach; and maintaining legitimacy among key international and local audiences can significantly enhance the prospects for success. The concluding section offers six recommendations for improving the performance of peace operations in these areas.

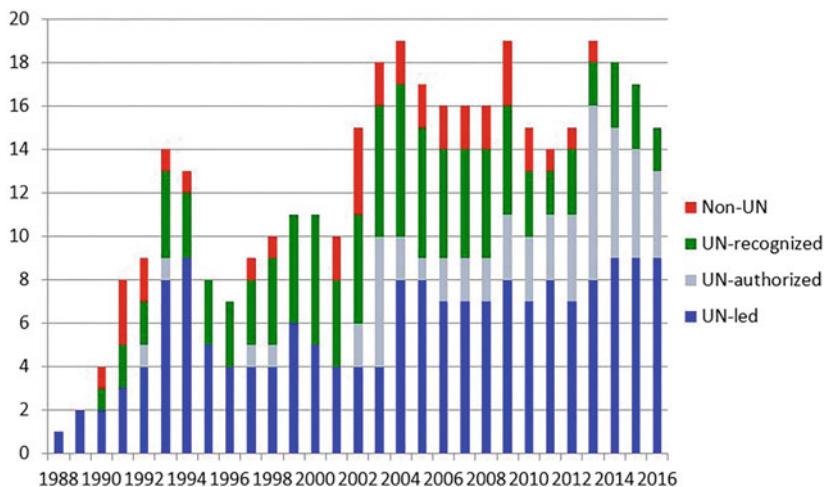
## TRENDS IN PEACE OPERATIONS IN AFRICA

Africa has witnessed more than 50 peace operations during the twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup> Several major trends have emerged: the number of peacekeepers, missions, and budgets has increased significantly with African states and the African Union (AU) playing increasingly important roles but the UN remaining the single most prominent actor; most missions have been given extremely wide-ranging and complex mandates; civilian protection has often risen to prominence among these tasks; disagreement persists over when peacekeepers should use military force; and “partnership peacekeeping” has become the norm in the continent. Each of these characteristics will be discussed more fully below.

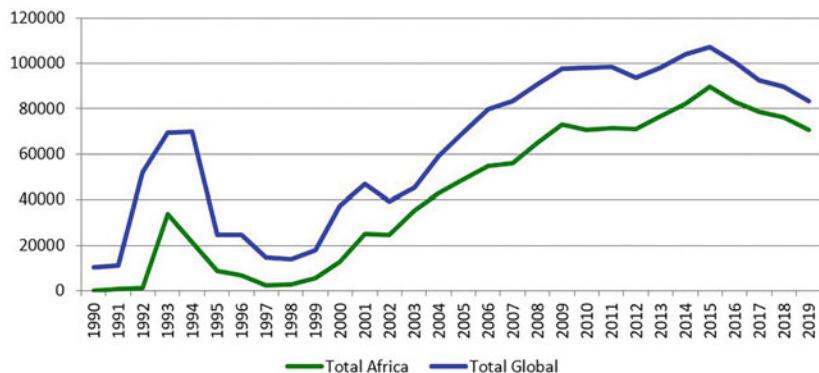
### *Record Levels*

First, the twenty-first century has witnessed significant growth in the number, size, and cost of peace operations in Africa (see Fig. 2.1). Since 2002, there have been at least 14 missions across the continent in each calendar year. By the end of 2016, there were over 115,000 uniformed peacekeepers in Africa: over 80,000 from the UN (see Fig. 2.2); over 20,000 from the AU; and approximately another 15,000 in regional and other operations. More than 11,000 were police officers. These figures do not include the estimated 15,500 additional civilian personnel in UN and AU peace operations. The cost of these operations reflects the fact that many of these personnel have deployed into often difficult, remote terrain and are required to come with large numbers of vehicles and other major equipment items and life support systems.

While the UN has deployed the most peacekeepers, there has been a major increase in the number of African personnel in these missions (nearly half of all UN uniformed peacekeepers are African), as well as a growing number of missions led or authorized by African regional

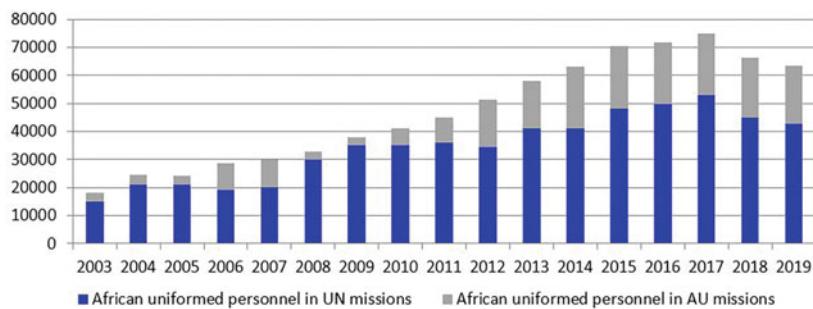


**Fig. 2.1** Number and types of peace operations in Africa, 1988–2016 (Source Adapted and updated from Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, “Trends in Peace Operations, 1947–2013,” in *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, ed. Koops et al. [Oxford University Press, 2015])



**Fig. 2.2** UN uniformed personnel worldwide and in Africa 1990–2019 (*Source* Adapted by author)

organizations. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) deployed most missions. Since 2004, however, the AU has played the central role, authorizing the deployment of approximately 70,000 uniformed peacekeepers in 12 missions (see Fig. 2.3).<sup>3</sup> However, there were three important caveats to this trend. First, these deployments required considerable external assistance. Second, the AU



**Fig. 2.3** Uniformed personnel deployed by African Union member states in UN and AU missions (31 July annual) (*Source* Providing for peacekeeping database, November 1990–present, International Peace Institute and George Washington University, <http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/contributions>, and author's calculations)

struggled to deploy sufficient numbers of police and other civilian experts on its missions. And, since 2003, the majority of African peacekeepers came from roughly one-fifth of the AU's members, particularly Burundi, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda.

### *Wide-Ranging Mandates*

The second major trend has been the growing list of mandated tasks given to peace operations in Africa, which range from observing ceasefires; protecting humanitarian relief supplies; supporting disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs; strengthening the rule of law and public security; supporting weak governments, including through extending state authority and security sector reform (SSR); protecting civilians and electoral processes; stabilization; counterinsurgency; to warring. Importantly, each set of tasks generally requires different force requirements, capabilities, and training, but this has not always been catered for during the force generation process. There was also a notable expansion in the importance placed on having police officers deploy in these missions to perform a variety of tasks related to strengthening the rule of law and public security.

Put bluntly, most peace operations in twenty-first century Africa were asked to help build institutions of liberal democratic governance in some of the continent's poorest and war-torn states. For their critics, these mandates had become too broad and unrealistic given the few incentives for conflict parties in Africa to build genuinely liberal institutions.

One problem was the lack of clarity over how peacekeepers should fulfill certain objectives and the meaning of key terms. As the head of the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations observed, not only were mission mandates "more complex than ever" but, "there remains a lack of consensus on how certain mandate tasks should be fulfilled."<sup>4</sup> Part of the problem was that even basic terminology used in mandates was often unclear. Peacekeepers were often told to "assist" authorities and "support" processes using "all necessary measures" without being given further specific instructions. "Peacebuilding" and "civilian protection" (see below) were another two widely debated and confusing concepts. The vague nature of such terms encouraged the unhelpful tendency for different national contingents within a peace operation to sometimes interpret their mandates in different ways.

Another problem stemmed from peacekeepers being given contradictory tasks. In both the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, for example, peacekeepers were told to help host governments extend their authority across the country and protect civilians—in the full knowledge that the government’s armed forces were among the principal perpetrators of violence against civilians. Peacekeepers had the legal right to use deadly force against host government forces that committed war crimes against local civilians. However, in practice, things were rarely that simple, either because government forces outnumbered the peacekeepers or because acting against the host government might cause it to expel the peace operation.

A third mandate problem was the tendency to produce long lists of tasks without providing criteria to clearly prioritize among them. The initial mandate for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), for example, contained a list of well over 40 different tasks with priority given to assisting with state-building and civilian protection, tasks that require very different capabilities and approaches and neither of which have a quick exit strategy. By 2018, the UN Secretary-General was telling the Council that UNMISS “cannot possibly implement 209 mandated tasks.”<sup>5</sup> On the positive side, the UN’s most recent operation in Africa, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (the mission is known by its French acronym, MINUSCA, the country is known by its English acronym, CAR), tried to overcome this problem by introducing the notion of “urgent temporary measures,” i.e., those tasks that should form the initial priority. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) also tried to prioritize tasks—but ultimately suffered from too many priorities, with its post-2016 mandate identifying three strategic objectives, four priority tasks, and six essential tasks.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, two high-level panels on UN peace operations had called for peacekeeping mandates to be sequenced. In 2000, the Brahimi Report called for mandates to remain in draft form until the UN’s member states provided the requisite resources.<sup>7</sup> In 2015, the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) called for a “two-stage sequenced mandating process” with fewer priorities that would allow missions to develop over time, rather than trying to do everything at once.<sup>8</sup>

### *Protecting Civilians*

Arguably one of the most important mandated tasks in twenty-first century missions has been protecting civilians.<sup>9</sup> Although many peace operations in Africa grappled with the problems of civilian protection throughout the 1990s, it was not until 1999 that all UN multidimensional peacekeeping operations in Africa included some explicit element of civilian protection in their mandates. Since 2003, the European Union (notably Operation Artemis and European Union Force [EUFOR] missions in Chad and CAR) and the AU (notably in its missions in Darfur, Mali, and CAR) have also given some of their operations civilian protection tasks. In part, the surge of civilian protection mandates stemmed from the recognition that local civilians usually judged a mission's effectiveness on how well it protected them rather than other more technical criteria. But it was also because several UN high-level inquiries concluded that the inability to distinguish between victims and aggressors and the failure to protect the former was highly damaging to the UN's legitimacy.<sup>10</sup>

But, even when civilian protection mandates were issued to UN peacekeepers, they came with geographic, political, and operational caveats. First, peacekeepers were supposed to protect civilians "without prejudice to responsibility of host nation"—despite the armed forces of some host governments being major perpetrators of civilian harm. Second, peacekeepers were only supposed to protect civilians within their existing "capabilities and areas of deployment." In one sense, this sensibly left key decisions about implementing this mandate to force commanders on the ground. But, on the other hand, it often encouraged peacekeepers not to use force to protect civilians, but rather to remain in their bases which, in turn, encouraged endangered civilians to flock to them.<sup>11</sup> Third, the focus was usually narrowed to protecting only those civilians "under imminent threat of violence" which, by definition, is a point at which it is too late for peacekeepers to succeed. In response to this problem, the UN started using the phrase "threat of violence" without the reference to "imminent" and emphasizing that peacekeepers should actively deter violence against civilians.<sup>12</sup>

Even with these caveats, UN peacekeepers struggled with how to translate this aspirational concept into practical military and policing tasks that could be trained and implemented in the field. It took the UN over

a decade to develop guidelines and training regimes on how its peacekeepers could best operationalize this concept in the field.<sup>13</sup> A big part of the problem was that UN peacekeeping missions had traditionally not been permitted to use intelligence-gathering capabilities because of political disputes within the UN General Assembly and Security Council. And yet, it was impossible for a mission with limited resources to respond effectively to threats against civilians if it did not have access to accurate and timely intelligence about the sources of such threats. As a consequence, some operations, especially the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and UNMISS, began to innovate their own responses to overcoming this challenge, including by creating Joint Protection Teams, Community Liaison Assistants, and Community Alert Networks. The formation of the All Sources Information Unit (ASIFU) in MINUSMA's early years was the closest a UN peacekeeping operation has come to developing an official intelligence-gathering capability.

Although most media reporting focused on the failures of peacekeepers to protect civilians, even in truly dire circumstances the presence of peacekeepers usually made the overall situation for civilians better, not worse.<sup>14</sup> The basic problem was that there was only so much even well-resourced peacekeepers could do. As one analysis correctly observed, peacekeeping operations could not “protect everyone from everything,” nor could they “operate without some semblance of a ‘peace to keep’ or halt determined belligerents wholly backed by a state.”<sup>15</sup>

### *Using Force*

The fourth trend in peace operations in Africa was persistent debate over when peacekeepers should use military force beyond self-defense. This raised fundamental questions about the nature and limits of peace operations and the efficacy of using multinational forces with large numbers of contributing countries to wield military power effectively. In twenty-first century Africa, there have been several examples of peace operations coming close to war-fighting at the tactical level against particular “spoiler” groups, including in Sierra Leone, the DRC, Côte d’Ivoire, Somalia, Mali and Central and West Africa against the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and Boko Haram. While the AU had no qualms about using a peace operation to engage in war-fighting, the UN’s basic

principles of peacekeeping—consent of the main conflict parties; impartiality; and minimum use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate—made it much less common in UN-led operations. The formation of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) within MONUSCO in 2013 generated a novel lexicon from the UN Security Council, which mandated it to “neutralize armed groups” by carrying out “targeted offensive operations.”<sup>16</sup>

When the UN Security Council authorized proactive military force beyond self-defense, it was usually in the name of either protecting civilians or defeating spoiler groups such as M23 in the DRC. The AU also regularly authorized its forces to protect civilians and defeat particular spoilers, notably in the Comoros, Somalia, Mali, CAR, and in its multinational task forces authorized to fight against the LRA and Boko Haram.

For the UN, this type of combat operations raised questions about whether it could remain an impartial actor. The UN’s response was, “yes, it could,” because impartiality permitted the use of force against recalcitrant parties: “Just as a good referee is impartial, but will penalize infractions, so a peacekeeping operation should not condone actions by the parties that violate the undertakings of the peace process or the international norms and principles that a United Nations peacekeeping operation upholds.”<sup>17</sup> However, these nuances were clearly lost on some armed groups who did not view UN peacekeepers as impartial and targeted them accordingly.

A key question is whether this was a sensible policy for the UN to pursue given the many difficulties involved with command and control in its peacekeeping operations, which left them poorly designed to fight wars. Moreover, most UN contributing countries did not sign up to fight wars or undertake proactive combat operations against determined adversaries. As a result of these inherent limitations, the latest HIPPO concluded that “extreme caution must guide any call for a United Nations peacekeeping operation to undertake enforcement tasks and that any such mandated task should be a time-limited, exceptional measure.”<sup>18</sup> Nor, it wrote, should UN peacekeepers conduct counter-terrorism operations.<sup>19</sup>

### *Partnership Peacekeeping*

The last major trend analyzed here is that “partnership peacekeeping” has become the norm in Africa. This entails collaboration on operations between two or more multilateral institutions and/or various bilateral actors. Several factors have driven this trend, including widespread recognition that no single actor can cope with Africa’s security challenges alone and that different actors bring comparative advantages to peace operations. As Fig. 2.1 shows, however, most peace operations have been authorized or supported by the UN Security Council, demonstrating the enduring significance of the UN brand and legitimacy. In Africa, the central partnerships involve relations among the UN, the AU, the RECs, the European Union, and important bilateral actors—principally France, the United States, and Britain.

In Africa, partnership peacekeeping has taken several different forms. There have been sequenced operations, as in Mali, Burundi, and CAR, in which responsibility transitions from one set of actors to another, usually from African organizations to the UN. There have been parallel operations where multiple missions coexist simultaneously within the same theater, as in the DRC, Côte d’Ivoire, and CAR. The UN has also provided a variety of support packages to regional missions using funds from its assessed contributions to peacekeeping, as in Darfur and Somalia. There has also been one joint hybrid mission between the UN and the AU in Darfur, Sudan, the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

## LESSONS IDENTIFIED FROM PEACE OPERATIONS IN AFRICA

What are the major generic lessons that can be identified from the numerous peace operations deployed in Africa during the twenty-first century? This section briefly summarizes four such lessons: the need to ensure peace operations are part of a viable strategy of conflict resolution; that means and ends are kept in tune; that a capabilities and effects-based approach to force generation is superior to a numbers-centric approach; and maintaining legitimacy among key international and local audiences can significantly enhance the prospects for success.

### *The Primacy of Politics*

Arguably the most important lesson is that successful peace operations are those that ensure what the HIPPO called “the primacy of politics.”<sup>20</sup> In essence, peace operations are political instruments, sometimes backed by a security guarantee in the form of troops. They are not the same thing as a political strategy aimed at resolving the crisis in question. Instead, as the HIPPO report emphasized, “UN peace operations must be deployed as part of a viable process” to achieve a political settlement to the crisis in question. The same goes for other forms of peace operations too. “Lasting peace,” the report concluded, “is not achieved nor sustained by military and technical engagements, but through political solutions.” It is, therefore, politics, not military force that is the peacekeeper’s primary weapon. As the HIPPO report put it, “political solutions, not military force, are the true force multipliers” for peacekeepers.<sup>21</sup>

A related lesson is that because political primacy ultimately rests with national actors, peacekeepers can only support peace processes; they cannot impose sustainable peace in the absence of local willingness to do so. If the UN, the AU, or other actors deploy peacekeepers without a political pathway to peace, the best-case scenario is that they limit some of the worst negative consequences of the armed conflict in question. But it would be naïve to believe that peacekeepers can deliver peace in a context in which important local actors want war. Political dynamics in New York and Addis Ababa will often push politicians to deploy peacekeepers even in the absence of a viable strategy of conflict resolution, but this only adds to the imperative to learn this particular lesson.

### *Ends and Means in Tune*

A second key lesson is that peace operations will likely fail when their means and ends are not in tune, i.e., peacekeepers are not given the resources necessary to achieve their goals. There are at least two dimensions to this lesson. First, the goals of the operation should be set out in clear, credible, and flexible mandates, and peacekeepers given appropriate Rules of Engagement. Second, once mandated, policymakers must prevent large vacancy rates i.e., discrepancies between the authorized force levels and the actual numbers and types of personnel on the ground (see below on force generation). Such personnel gaps not only hamper a

mission's ability to take advantage of the so-called "golden hour" immediately after the cessation of fighting but also signal to the conflict parties a lack of political will within the authorizing organizations.

Large vacancy rates have damaged the performance of several peace operations, perhaps most notably UNAMID in Sudan and AMISOM in Somalia. This issue is not only important at the mission start-up phase but also when mandates are changed in response to developing circumstances and alter the mission's force strength and/or capabilities. Unfortunately, mandates have often been revised without providing peacekeepers with the necessary additional or different resources. Authorized reinforcements, for example, have become notorious for not arriving as planned, as occurred in eastern DRC in 2008 and South Sudan in early 2014. In perhaps the worst example, it took until December 2016 for AMISOM to receive its first three military helicopters after the UN Security Council authorized twelve of them in 2012.

### *Effective Force Generation*

A third, and related, lesson is that without effective force generation processes peace operations will struggle to achieve success.<sup>22</sup> More specifically, it is clear that a capabilities and effects-based approach to force generation is superior to the traditional numbers-centric approach.<sup>23</sup> Once a peace operation has been established, the authorizing institution must ensure the relevant peacekeepers and capabilities are generated rapidly. Each peace operation requires a unique combination of force requirements and capabilities. Most of these must come from voluntary contributions from states since most international organizations lack permanent armed forces or police.

The UN made significant progress in 2015, when it established the new Strategic Force Generation and Capability Planning Cell to play matchmaker between the UN and its member states who contribute to peace operations. There is also a new Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System to coordinate how and where member states can pledge military, police, and other civilian personnel to participate in UN missions.<sup>24</sup> In addition, high-level political attention at the UN has been maintained by a series of peacekeeping leaders' summits and defense ministerials in 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017, at which UN member states have pledged over 50,000 uniformed peacekeepers and a wide range of assets and enablers.

Past experiences show that effective force generation (whether at the UN, AU, or elsewhere) is more likely with a broad pool of potential contributing states upon which to draw.<sup>25</sup> Without a broad pool of contributors, authorizing institutions are unable to be very selective when assembling their peace operations and instead have to rely on what capabilities are available rather than what is required for the job. In Africa, particularly important and persistent gaps in the force generation process have included a dearth of female peacekeepers; French-speakers; police and other civilian experts; and a wide range of mobility vehicles and enabling units (especially medical, engineering, and logistics).

### *Ensure Accountability*

A fourth key, generic lesson is that peace operations are less likely to succeed if they do not maintain legitimacy among key international and local audiences. This is often directly connected to ensuring that peacekeepers remain accountable both to their international bosses and the local populations they are supposed to serve.<sup>26</sup> When peace operations are dependent on local support for their legitimacy and effectiveness, misconduct (including causing harm to civilians, engaging in sexual exploitation and abuse, or trafficking in illicit goods) can have negative strategic effects. Indeed, misconduct by peacekeepers can damage the reputation of both the particular mission as well as peacekeeping as a whole.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the preceding trends and major generic lessons identified from peace operations in twenty-first century Africa, this concluding section briefly sketches six recommendations intended to enhance the effectiveness of peace operations.

1. *Enhance peacemaking capabilities.* In order to create the impression that they are engaged in meaningful responses to crises, political leaders in New York, Addis Ababa, and elsewhere are likely to persist in deploying peace operations to African crises in the absence of a viable strategy of conflict resolution. Assuming this trend is likely to continue, advocates of more effective peace operations should push to invest more resources in developing better international mediation and peacemaking capabilities, including ensuring the full

development of the AU's new Mediation Support Unit. It is the failure to resolve Africa's crises through peacemaking that has placed an impossible burden on peacekeepers.

2. *Clarify the core tasks of peace operations.* Political leaders in New York and Addis Ababa should also develop a stronger consensus on the core tasks that contemporary UN and AU peace operations should be able to undertake. So far, too many peace operations in Africa have involved a mix of different, sometimes contradictory, agendas, including peacekeeping (in its traditional sense), peace consolidation (assisting conflict parties after they have committed to a political settlement), civilian protection, atrocity prevention, counter insurgency, counter terrorism, stabilization, state-building and war-fighting. Not only does each of these tasks require distinct capabilities and training regimes, but also some of them may simply be beyond the capacities of peacekeepers. Certainly, neither the UN nor AU is well suited to fight wars against transnational insurgents or carry out counter terrorism campaigns. The UN and AU should both urgently clarify the doctrine that shall govern their own peace operations and develop their force generation and training requirements accordingly.
3. *Incentivize some aspects of force generation.* Once the core tasks (and limits) of UN and AU peace operations have been clarified, the authorizing institutions should look to enhance their force generation processes accordingly. Both organizations should clarify whether it is right, and, if so, how to incentivize different types of contributions from their members. Key areas might include incentives for those contributing states that can assume greater than average risk and/or can deploy rapidly into the field. The UN's new Peacekeeping Capabilities Readiness System is already offering premiums in the case of enabling units able to rapidly deploy in 30/60/90 days. This approach should be further developed at the UN and also considered by the AU.
4. *Develop standards and regularly assess peacekeeper performance.* The UN and AU should develop agreed performance standards for peacekeepers deployed by their respective organizations. The UN has taken a major step forward in this regard with the release of its Military Unit Manuals and force assessment guidance. First, therefore, the UN should complete the process of identifying operational standards for the tasks its peacekeepers are expected to perform and

devise metrics for ensuring that peacekeepers live up to them in the field. This process should be developed for both rank-and-file peacekeepers and senior mission leadership teams. In the immediate term, the effort should focus on implementing the UN's new policy on "Operational Readiness Assurance and Performance Improvement."<sup>27</sup> This awkwardly titled document is arguably one of the most important in the history of peacekeeping because it details how the UN can improve the performance of deployed military units by ensuring a holistic approach by all stakeholders. Specifically, the UN Secretary-General should ensure that the Performance Improvement Cycle described as part of this process is institutionalized, adequately resourced, and routinely carried out for all UN peace operations. This process would also need a policing equivalent. Once the UN's operational standards are clarified and the organization is able to evaluate them in the field, it must ensure that when peacekeepers fail to perform they should be replaced by those who can. The AU should adopt a similar type of policy fit for its own purposes.

5. *Ensure sustainable and predictable funding for African peace operations.* While the UN system of financing its peace operations works relatively effectively, the same cannot be said for African-led missions, which have long struggled to find funds. In order to satisfy the approach to funding operations set out in Article 21 of its Peace and Security Council Protocol (2002),<sup>28</sup> the AU developed a new source of funding for its peace operations that was intended to deliver on its commitment to fund 25 percent of its peace and security activities by 2020.<sup>29</sup> This took the form of the new AU Peace Fund, launched in late 2018. By early 2020 the Fund had generated over \$100 million to spend on the AU's peace and security activities.<sup>30</sup> Despite this significant progress, the AU is still far from financially self-sufficient with regard to peace operations, hence the UN and AU must continue to work out how and when African-led missions can access the UN's assessed peacekeeping contributions.
6. *Stop peacekeepers engaging in sexual exploitation and abuse.* Finally, all actors engaged in peace operations must ensure that they put a stop to peacekeepers committing sexual exploitation and abuse and hold perpetrators accountable, quickly and transparently. The victims must also be given access to reparations for any crimes committed by international peacekeepers. The most sensible place

to start is to ensure that the commitments set out in UN Security Council Resolution 2272 (March 11, 2016) are consistently implemented. For the AU, it means implementing its zero-tolerance policy. In this sense, the firing of the UN's head of mission in Central African Republic, General Babacar Gaye, over allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers there has set an important precedent. The same should apply when UN peacekeepers engage in other types of misconduct, including smuggling and other forms of civilian harm. As Ban Ki-moon noted in his farewell address as UN Secretary-General, these episodes "tarnished the reputation of the United Nations and, far worse, traumatized many people we serve."<sup>31</sup>

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## CHAPTER 3

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# The Economics of Peacebuilding: International Organizations for Dealing with Victor and Vanquished

*Vera Songwe*

Peace has been declared at Paris. But Winter approaches.<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The art of peacebuilding is as old as conflict. In a bell curve manner, conflicts began among families, tribes, nations, kingdoms, and clusters of nations, and have since returned to mostly conflict within nations. As conflicts have intensified, so have conflict resolution mechanisms become more sophisticated and institutionalized. Early on, peacebuilding was achieved through unions between the victor and vanquished. This tradition persisted up to nineteenth-century Europe. In some traditions,

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This chapter represents the personal views of the author.

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especially in the East, the armies of the vanquished were handed over as part of the spoils of war; in others, the territory was annexed. These were well-established practices and constituted what could be termed the etiquette of post-conflict agreements and peacebuilding. The League of Nations, set up by Allied nations following the end of the First World War, was the first global institution set up to handle post-war peacebuilding but also aimed to avoid wars. It met with limited success. Two decades later, following an even bloodier war, its predecessor was created, The United Nations (UN), coupled with two development institutions, informally known as the Bretton Woods institutions (The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund [IMF]).

This chapter draws from the contrasting experiences of the League of Nations and the United Nations to highlight the centrality of economic development to peacebuilding. In doing so, the chapter questions the established sequence of peacebuilding: that only when peace is fully restored can the focus move to economic development. This sequence is clearly contrary to all successful experiences. The chapter argues that the near-dogmatic insistence on this sequential process has, in many cases, such as Guinea-Bissau and Libya, undermined peacebuilding before it has even begun.

Most conflicts are about voice, economic equity, inclusion, and access. Today, J. M. Keynes's words at the end of the Treaty of Versailles discussions—“peace has been declared at Paris. But Winter approaches”<sup>2</sup>—still resonate in many peacebuilding situations as one wonders what is being done to guarantee shared economic development as a weapon of peace. The challenge of responding, to more internal conflicts in the case of Africa, also requires an alternative response that is underpinned by economic imperatives rather than by an established sequence of political negotiations. Most of the conflicts on the continent are, in fact, a direct result of economic deprivation, or inflation-induced conflicts. These require rapid economic peacebuilding solutions.

Section one of this chapter will summarize the activities that led to the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and the big omissions and shortfalls of the Treaty. The second section will look at the peace agreement ending the Second World War and compare and contrast this with the First World War. The third section looks at how the lessons from both agreements have been applied to peacemaking and peacebuilding in Africa, with particular attention to the cases of Guinea-Bissau and Côte

d'Ivoire. The fourth section concludes with lessons learned for the future of peacebuilding on the continent.

## THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES—AN AMBIGUOUS PEACE

In 1920 following the end of the First World War, which cost the lives of more than 20 million people, split roughly equally between military personnel and civilians, the Allied powers came together to agree on the construct of a new world order. In a foreshadowing comment, Keynes lamented the lack of economic vision in the peace plan. He wrote, the Versailles Treaty “includes no provisions for the economic rehabilitation of Europe...nothing to make the defeated Central Empires into good neighbours.... Nor does it promote in any way a compact of economic solidarity.”<sup>3</sup> For an economist, the concept of economic solidarity was vital, as it implied jobs and wages—the centerpiece of Keynesian economics.

The peacemakers acknowledged the daunting task that lay before them. “Making peace is harder than waging war,” French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau reflected in 1919 as the victorious powers drew up peace terms, finalized the shape of the new League of Nations, and tried to rebuild Europe and the global order.<sup>4</sup> For Clemenceau and his colleagues, the prospect of crafting a peace agreement was particularly challenging. Unlike in 1815, when negotiators met in Vienna to wind up the Napoleonic Wars, in 1919 Europe was not tired of war and revolution. Nor had aggressor nations been utterly defeated and occupied, as they would be in 1945. Rather, leaders in 1919 confronted a world in turmoil. Fighting continued throughout much of Eastern Europe even as the Treaty was being crafted.

Then-US president, Woodrow Wilson saw the Paris Peace Conference and resulting Treaty as the beginning of a crusade for humankind. The Treaty was to usher in peace and end all suffering. All the Allied leaders believed that the agreement was just and fitting for both the victor and vanquished. Wilson’s League of Nations was meant to create an international community of democratic nations. By providing collective security for one another, they would not only end aggression but build a fairer and more prosperous world.

The victorious Allied forces (Britain, France, the United States, and Italy), both their populations and their leaders, had the right intentions but also wanted to ensure that the vanquished (Germany, Austria,

Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire) paid for their aggression. The tension between restoring peace and making the vanquished accountable is ages old and carries within it a delicate balance, one that proposes a just peace while ensuring there is enough deterrent on the part of the aggressors not to exact revenge or feel completely marginalized.

A couple of elements stand out in the Treaty. While it was signed by all the countries, each country negotiated a separate peace deal with the vanquished nations and then the agreements were brought together; in the end, each country tried to exact individual benefit rather than collectively attempt to ensure that the Treaty promoted peace. The French wanted retribution for the destruction of industry and cities on the Rhine and assurances this would never happen again. The British, led by Lloyd George, largely accomplished their main goal, which was to wipe out Germany's High Seas Fleet as a threat to the Royal Navy and protect the British Empire.

Tens of thousands of German civilians died of starvation or malnutrition-related illnesses before Britain finally lifted the blockade once Germany signed the Versailles Treaty, sowing the seeds of German resentment. The Treaty even added to Britain's colonial empire when it (along with France, Belgium, and Japan) assumed "mandates" (colonies in all but name) over colonies the treaty stripped from Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Britain acquired Iraq, Palestine, and Jordan in the Middle East and former German colonies in Africa: South West Africa (present-day Namibia), German East Africa (present-day Burundi, Rwanda, and mainland Tanzania), Togoland (present-day Togo), and German Kamerun (mainly present-day Cameroon).

Wilson's vision for the League of Nations, codified as part I of the Versailles Treaty, was a "general association of nations established to afford mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity of all nations great and small."<sup>5</sup> The pillars of the League were collective security, disarmament, and settlement of international disputes through arbitration. Yet this was based on voluntary participation by League members—essentially relying on "good will." The League of Nations had no standing military force to back up any decision it made, and if a nation disagreed with the League's decision, it could simply "opt out"—as Nazi Germany (1933), Imperial Japan (1933), and Fascist Italy (1937) eventually did when they withdrew from the League after it tried to oppose their aggression. For want of leadership, among other things, the promise

of 1919 soon turned into the disillusionment, division, and aggression of the 1930s.

Part II of the treaty creating Germany's post-war boundaries (Germany lost 13 percent of its territory and all of its colonies) was seen as dispossessing Germany of its rightful assets and left Germans feeling put upon; part V imposed military restrictions on Germany's armed forces; and part VIII specified war reparations to be paid principally to France, Belgium, Britain, and Italy for civilian damages caused by the German invasion and occupation. The reparations clause was later used by Germany to build national resentment (despite never actually fulfilling their reparation obligations). It provided political fodder for building a new front against the Allied forces.

Glaringly absent from the Treaty of Versailles was any reference to the rebuilding of an economic architecture for trade. The League of Nations focused on the restoration of peace and the protocols for achieving it. The Allied powers stripped Germany of its assets or destroyed trade routes and vessels. There was no attention paid to the economics of peace. Instead, the focus was on the need for Germany to pay reparations and the victors taking over colonies to increase their influence.

The second omission of the Versailles Treaty was that while it purported to end the war there was still fighting going on in Europe further to the East; the appetite for war was not fully quenched. The central theater had been shut down but the continual confrontations in the periphery meant that this could ignite suddenly into a full-blown war again.

The lack of collective enforcement of the Treaty, with the United States not signing onto the final agreement creating the League—an American idea which never found sufficient support at home—weakened the overall peace architecture. The creation of an international body that would help preserve peace and punish those who started wars was lofty in its own right, but many Americans worried the Treaty could inadvertently pull the United States into faraway wars for which it had no direct economic or political interest. The U.S. Congress voted down the Treaty in 1920 leaving the League of Nations without the backing of its founder.

The League and the reparations agreement all proved to be short-lived, as their shortcomings created the opening for renewed aggression in Europe.

## AN ECONOMIC PEACE TO BEGIN ALL PEACE

In 1939, exactly two decades after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany invaded Poland, marking the beginning of the Second World War. Unimaginable in 1919, the casualties from the Second World War were almost double that of the First. Over 70 million people are estimated to have died. This is equal to the current population of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal combined, or 70 percent of the population of Ethiopia. Following the end of the Second World War, the Allied forces sought to correct three fundamental mistakes of the Versailles Treaty. First, the Allies negotiated the peace collectively; second, the role of the United States was more forceful; and third, the Allied powers listened to Keynes and sought to build an economic recovery plan—The European Recovery Program (ERP), otherwise known as the Marshall Plan.<sup>6</sup>

This is the first time in the history of peacebuilding that a full-fledged economic development plan was linked to a peace treaty, with credible and well-funded institutions attached to the plan. The ERP, which began in 1948, was a massive program of aid from the United States to western and southern European countries, aimed at helping economic renewal and strengthening democracy after the devastation of the Second World War.

Sixteen European countries received about US \$14 billion in aid between 1948 and 1951. Britain received the largest share of this support (US \$3.2 billion); the next largest amounts went to France (US \$2.7 billion), Italy (US \$1.5 billion), West Germany (US \$1.1 billion), and the Netherlands (US \$1.1 billion). These funds comprised about 2.5 percent of the aggregate national income of European countries over the 4 years. They were 1.2 percent of the total gross national product of the United States. In present-day terms, this would be equivalent to about \$217 billion for reconstruction. The recovery plan had conditions for the disbursements of aid to address issues of *inter alia* taxation, budgeting, money, labor markets, and trade. Britain, for example, agreed in 1948 to balance its budget annually, maintain currency reserves at specific levels, and restrict tariffs. The unique element of the ERP was that it was administered entirely by the US government, rather than all the Allied powers. The Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA),

the US agency that administered aid, used 5 percent of these funds for its in-country administrative costs. The remainder was allocated mainly for economic development, as a result of negotiations between officials of the ECA and each European government. The implementation of the plan benefitted from total bipartisan support.

## DIVIDENDS OF THE ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

The achievements of the ERP were unparalleled in global economic history. After the First World War, it took seven years to regain the pre-war levels of production in Western Europe. At the end of 1951, three years into the implementation of the ERP, industrial production was 41 percent above pre-war levels, 64 percent above 1947 levels, and well beyond the target originally set for 1952. Agricultural production was 9 percent above pre-war and 24 percent above 1947 levels. Gross national product—the total sum of Western Europe's production of goods and services—had risen 25 percent in real terms in less than 4 years and was 15 percent above pre-war. The transportation system was rehabilitated; electrical output doubled over pre-war levels; steel production doubled between 1947–1951, far exceeding production by Russia and her satellites; and refined petroleum production quadrupled over pre-war levels.

The gains in agricultural production were less striking but also substantial. Cereal production and bread grains almost regained their pre-war levels, and the output of potatoes, sugar, meat, milk, and oils overshot the targets of the ERP program; in every case, except meat, the results were faster. All other outputs were substantially above the targets and pre-war levels.

The ERP was the largest economic development plan implemented following conflict to restore peace. But it was more than a peacebuilding plan. It was also a vast investment program which guaranteed substantial returns for the United States.

Europe was therefore guaranteed sufficient energy to power and revive its industries; while the United States was able to ensure it was guaranteed supply for its industries and demand for its products. For these objectives to be realized, two conditions had to be met: real incomes had to increase, thus increasing domestic savings; and Europe's current account deficit

had to be reduced. The peace plan was, thus, at its heart, an economic plan. By 1951 the UK was fully back on its feet and tensions began to emerge between the UK and United States over the former's development trajectory, especially the national health programs the UK sought to adopt.<sup>7</sup>

Christopher P. Mayhew, then Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, speaking in a debate at the United Nations Economic and Social Council, famously said, “We have not the slightest intention of modifying our economic, our social, or our political plans in order to qualify for this aid.” Moreover, he argued, the British economic recovery was a result of according priority to “human welfare and social progress,” including a “complete national health service” and “public ownership of industry.” As economic activity was restored in the UK, tensions between the United States and UK also rose over economic priorities, resulting in the UK finally deciding to opt out of the plan, even as they continued to receive some support from the United States mainly to ensure they were protected from any aggression from Russia.<sup>8</sup>

### LESSONS FROM THE ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

The lessons from the successful ERP are important for all subsequent peacebuilding efforts globally. Yet, for reasons that are difficult to explain the world has never been able to replicate the ERP as a tool for peacebuilding anywhere else.

The ERP was administered by one country and agency, and rolled out across numerous countries. Essentially, its main objective was to restore and strengthen the economic might of Europe. But, more critically, the ERP did so without sequencing and conditioning initial recovery support on the need for governments to change their fiscal, tax, or monetary policy. Resources were disbursed even as conversations on reforms took place. Even in the case of the UK, where there was growing criticism that it was building a welfare state, the ERP continued to support the country while trying to negotiate a different approach to the UK's domestic policy stance on its social programs. In response to the demand for raw materials from the United States, an important part of the European reconstruction effort was the agreement by the Steel Committee to manage steel

output in order to control prices to the benefit of the member states. While Europe benefitted from the ERP to recover economically, it was in parallel looking to increase its competitiveness, grow its markets, and strengthen its economic base. To do this, it began to build a European integration plan under French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman. This ultimately led to the creation of the European Union.<sup>9</sup>

As George C. Marshall remarked in his famous “Marshall Plan” speech: “The remedy [to peace] in Europe lies in breaking the vicious circle and restoring the confidence of the European people in the economic future of their own countries and of Europe as a whole. The manufacturer and the farmer throughout wide areas must be able and willing to exchange their product for currencies, the continuing value of which is not open to question.”<sup>10</sup> This remains true and pertinent for Africa today.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PEACEBUILDING IN AFRICA

The preceding sections have summarized the failures and successes of two of the world’s most famous peace agreements. The world has not seen destruction on this scale since 1945. However, conflicts persist and the international community in many cases appears incapable of restoring peace. How is it that we have not been able to replicate the ERP? What elements of the plan bear replicating or building on? What ingredients of the plan apply to Africa?

Africa has made considerable progress on the cross-border peace front. At the end of 2019, there were fewer than five active or latent cross-border conflicts on the continent. Post-independence, African countries pledged to respect colonial borders and, with the exception of Sudan/South Sudan, they have largely kept to this promise. The biggest challenge on the continent is that of intra-state conflict. And it is here that peace remains elusive on the continent. Compared to 2005 when there were only 6 countries in active conflict on the continent and 7 armed conflicts, as of 2019 the number of countries with armed conflicts has risen to 17.

The institutional architecture of the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions as initially conceived does not allow these institutions to play their rightful role in peacebuilding. The continuum from peacemaking, to peacekeeping, to peacebuilding is fragmented and often replete with interests that are not aligned, as was the case in 1919.

## INACTION IN GUINEA-BISSAU

The case of Guinea-Bissau is instructive. Guinea-Bissau gained independence in 1974. In its short existence, the country has had over 17 *coup d'états* and as many elections, while the three processes of peace making, keeping, and building have been quite separate and not integrated. Peace-making is mostly run by the UN; peacekeeping is led by Nigeria and Angola as continental interests dictate; and peacebuilding or economic peacebuilding driven by the Bretton Woods institutions. Unlike post-war Europe, no one single economic power—be it Nigeria, Angola, Portugal, or Brazil—has stepped up to design an economic recovery program that would provide a win-win result for both. The mediation by purely international institutions has proved insufficient and inadequate to restore peace fully.

In addition, like Germany after the First World War, conflict in Guinea-Bissau has never been fully quelled. A faction of the population still remains equipped for conflict, believing that conflict can and will provide a better shift of power in their favor. More than 20 years after independence, Guinea-Bissau has not been able to establish a viable peace, as the warring factions remain divided along ethnic, and military versus civilian, lines. To date, the international community has been incapable of launching a sizeable and fully inclusive economic recovery plan that benefits all the citizens, akin to the ERP. Rather, these piecemeal attempts have helped to foster divisions and left Guinea-Bissau with one of the highest rates of poverty on the continent despite its rich natural marine, agriculture, and mineral resources.

## CÔTE D'IVOIRE—A SUCCESS STORY

Though not as successful in magnitude as the ERP, the case of Côte d'Ivoire nevertheless provides some useful pointers on what can be achieved. While the international community, in all its formats, was present in Côte d'Ivoire as the peace was established, following nearly a decade of on-again, off-again civil war in the 2000s, one main economic power, France, decided to underwrite an important part of the peace-building plan. As a result, Côte d'Ivoire did not have to wait for years for the economic recovery plan to kick in. Unlike the impressive record within the first four years of the ERP, Côte d'Ivoire did not experience such high rates of growth but nevertheless it registered a consistent

8 percent growth rate, demonstrating its ability to rebound. A strong Côte d'Ivoire allowed for more French investment in the country, similar to the case of the UK and United States during the ERP.

It is often argued that Côte d'Ivoire was able to rebound because the human capital needed to revive production and industry already existed. The success of the ERP rested, in a similar way, on the availability of skilled labor and strong institutions on which to build a recovery plan. Where institutions are weak, replicating the success of the ERP will prove difficult but not impossible. An important element of the ERP was the recognition of some mutual dependence: the United States needed steel and Europe needed coal. In Côte d'Ivoire, the crisis affected cocoa and chocolate prices considerably and there was a need to stabilize supply and prices in order to minimize global market disruptions. International support for the recovery, as in the case of the ERP, focused on improving the balance of payments so Côte d'Ivoire could rely less on aid and more on Foreign Direct Investment and domestic savings for investment. Côte d'Ivoire was able to quickly rebuild its reserves and increase productivity.

The test of the robustness of the peace will come with the electoral process. The ERP focused on the economic peacebuilding because, even in Germany, broad principles of representative governments had already taken hold, thereby reducing the need to emphasize the “democracy” element.

Overall, despite its shortcomings, Côte d'Ivoire's experience of peacebuilding—relying heavily on an economic recovery program underwritten by a single nation, France, and supported by the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions—has proven successful. Essential to peace in Côte d'Ivoire was the fact that the international community negotiated as one; and internally, strong coalitions for peace were able to form, underpinned by the promise of economic prosperity.

## BLEAK OUTLOOK FOR LIBYA AND THE SAHEL

The Sahel, and Libya in particular, do not present any of the elements needed to deliver a long and lasting peace. Similar to Versailles, the victors individually focused on ensuring they benefitted or protected existing investments in Libya or increased their investments. There was not a collective peace deal aimed at restoring the economic potential of Libya. Second, again like Versailles, while the end of the war was declared, the Libyan factions are not done fighting; as peace was declared in some parts of the country, fighting continued in others, opening the door for renewed escalation of conflict. While Libya's exports could have helped

to launch a massive ERP, the lack of cohesion within the international community did not allow for such a solution. In addition, unlike in the Second World War where the United States was able to play a strong leadership role, Italy could not take up this role with Libya and the United States was reluctant to do so, creating a leadership vacuum which still persists in 2020.

## CONCLUSION

The end of the ERP for Europe saw the beginning of the greatest European project: European Integration, which resulted in a stronger and more united Europe, built on clear democratic principles and complemented by principles of macroeconomic prudence and competition and trade openness. With zero interest rates in the West, a young population in Africa and a growing middle class, the economic argument for a peacebuilding partnership with Africa has never been more compelling.

The Marshall Plan was a limited investment that paid incalculable dividends. A situation favorable to American interests was established in Europe. The aid program lifted Western Europe off its knees, launched the American challenge to the Soviet Union, and bolstered the American economy. This last point runs counter to conventional economic wisdom: how could massive government expenditures be a net plus to the domestic economy? The experience of the Marshall Plan shows the answer. Investing to protect prosperity at home generated peace and prosperity abroad, which in turn led to still greater prosperity for the donor.<sup>11</sup>

Africa is a peacebuilding theater. An ERP-type program in some conflict settings could unleash benefits to first movers who dare to take up the challenge.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. The Economic Reconstruction Program (ERP) is an imperfect but important model.** The ERP is hardly the perfect solution to today's conflicts and peacebuilding efforts in the developing world. Nevertheless, it holds the main ingredients for sustained and inclusive peace. The promise of economic prosperity is a clear prerequisite for peace. Over the last 50 years, the developed world has spent huge sums on development aid and the World Bank and IMF, like the

UN, have been very active. But, the overall results of interventions remain below expectations.

2. **Establish a social contract for economic improvement between peacemakers and peacebuilders.** Numerous case studies reveal that the absence of a social contract between the peacemakers and peacebuilders on a clear economic improvement plan has been a central factor in the failure of efforts to build peace. Where attention has not been paid to the importance of inclusion, it has led, as in the case of Sudan, to the breakup of the country rather than to the consolidation of the positives and creation of economic inter-dependence benefitting both sides.
3. **Committed investment partners and institutions are essential.** A successful ERP plan in Africa needs only one of two conditions to exist: adequate institutions, as existed in Côte d'Ivoire, or a deep entrepreneurial culture, together with a committed bilateral investment partner. Where the possibility of reviving or building economic activity exists, where markets for outputs exist to guarantee that aid will turn into an investment in the short run, and countries can move from being aid-dependent to partners, the ERP model holds great promise. Institutions like the UN and the Bretton Woods duo can then serve as honest brokers of these relationships.

## NOTES

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## CHAPTER 4

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# Religion and Peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa

*Lado Tonlieu Ludovic, S. J.*

## INTRODUCTION

Three religious systems dominate the religious landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa today: African traditional religions, Christianity, and Islam. Religion remains a significant component of social life on the African continent; recent projections suggest that this importance will continue for the next four decades.<sup>1</sup> According to a 2016 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, “The share of Christians worldwide who live in Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to increase dramatically between 2015 and 2060, from 26 percent to 42 percent, due to high fertility in the region. Sub-Saharan Africa is also expected to become home to a growing share of the world’s Muslims. By 2060, 27 percent of the global Muslim population is projected to be living in the region, up from 16 percent in 2015.”<sup>2</sup>

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But, clear-cut statistics can be misleading when it comes to dynamics of religious identity in Africa, partly because of the complexity of religious practice. In daily practice, religion is perceived and lived primarily as a problem-solving tool. Many believers expect religion to solve personal and social problems such as finding a spouse, bearing a child, curing an illness, finding a job, fighting witchcraft, obtaining a visa, etc. This is especially pronounced in the context of the crisis of the social responsibility of the state.<sup>3</sup> The complexities of the religious landscape paired with the importance of religions in the lives of Africans mean that “to ignore religion, as a matter of obvious political and even economic importance, threatens the credibility of academic investigations.”<sup>4</sup> This insight obviously applies to the domain of peacebuilding in Africa as peace, justice, and reconciliation feature prominently among the religious expectations of African believers.

The role of religion in peacebuilding in Africa has to be located within the wider framework of the role of religion in the public space in Africa more generally. Indeed, religion and public policy “intertwine because both claim to give authoritative answers to important questions about how people should live.”<sup>5</sup> In a critical appraisal of earlier theories of secularization, José Casanova has argued that although the fusion of politics and religion is no longer an option in modern societies, at least in the West, the social differentiation of religion and politics is not incompatible with the public role of religion.<sup>6</sup> In spite of processes of secularization, religious voices are not absent from public debates—especially those that directly challenge their core beliefs and practices. To begin with, “religion in Africa was never relegated, even superficially, to a space outside politics and current events, or to benign places of private worship. Rather, because of the history of religion and religious transformation in Africa, religion has always been perceived, by a majority of Africans, as having the power to radically change social life and history.”<sup>7</sup> It is, therefore, no surprise that people in Africa turn to religion for resources to prevent conflicts or to restore peace.

The past 30 years have been marked by major developments that have determined the role of religion in Africa’s public sphere. These include the continent’s tilt toward democracy, the decline of the social responsibility of the state particularly following the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programs of the 1980s and 1990s, civil wars, and threats from a variety of non-state armed groups, including terrorist organizations. Given these developments, non-state actors, including religious organizations, have thrived, and some have taken up the challenge of peacebuilding.

The first section of this chapter reviews some of the major developments in the field of religious peacebuilding in Africa in a context of crisis-ridden democratization processes; the second section looks at the case studies of Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic (CAR), and explores some key issues and lessons learned related to religious peacebuilding; the third and final section identifies three issues that require the attention of policymakers.

## THE PAST 30 YEARS: AN OVERVIEW OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS PEACEBUILDING IN AFRICA

Whereas in Western academic circles there are debates about what some have described as the “return” of religion in the public space, in Africa the reality is that religion has never left the public space, in spite of the rhetoric of the “secular” state.<sup>8</sup> Not only is religion present in the public space, it is eager to make its voice heard in policymaking. Besides their active involvement in the fields of relief services, education, health, human rights, and civic education, religious organizations in Africa have been involved in the three dimensions of peacebuilding—preventing violence, managing conflict, and transforming conflicts.<sup>9</sup> Thomas Banchoff rightly speaks of the “underappreciated” contribution of religious communities to peacemaking: “Less visible, but no less significant, is the peaceful engagement of religious communities in contemporary world affairs. ... But it is nonviolent. Less likely to make the newspapers, it has far-reaching, if underappreciated, impact.”<sup>10</sup>

### *Religious Diplomacy*

In a number of significant cases, religious diplomacy has succeeded where state actors and international organizations had failed to bring back peace in communities torn by conflicts. The outstanding peacemaking success of the Catholic lay movement of Sant’Egidio in Mozambique is one of the best illustrations of this commitment to peace of religious organizations. Thanks to their quiet and discrete diplomacy, consisting of several rounds of talks between warring factions, they managed to secure a peace agreement in October 1992 which ended decades of civil war between FRELIMO and RENAMO.<sup>11</sup>

Over the past 30 years, religious leaders in a number of African countries have been called upon to act as mediators, especially in times of political transition and conflicts. For example, religious leaders were solicited in the early 1990s to preside over sovereign national conferences in countries such as Benin, Republic of Congo, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and on the whole, they were quite effective in facilitating peaceful transitions from one-party systems to political pluralism.<sup>12</sup> This was a tremendous contribution to peace and stability. Even in countries, such as Zambia, where there was no national conference, churches played a critical role to ensure a relatively peaceful transition to multiparty politics in the early 1990s. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, they exerted public pressure on Kenneth Kaunda's regime to return to a pluralistic political system.<sup>13</sup> Religious leaders have also been called upon to head national truth and reconciliation commissions. Archbishop Desmond Tutu was in charge of the first commission of this kind in Africa, leading the reconciliation process in post-Apartheid South Africa. Since then a number of clerics have been appointed to such commissions in other countries, including Togo and Côte d'Ivoire.

### *Islamic Social and Humanitarian Services*

Recent decades have also witnessed the growing visibility of Islamic social and humanitarian services in a field previously dominated by Christian and secular social and relief services. One of the major successful Muslim peacebuilding actors in Africa is the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC), (based in the Wajir district of north-eastern Kenya), which incorporates Muslim traditional mechanisms and values in its conflict resolution initiatives. Some of its achievements include the establishment of a Joint Committee of Clans to monitor tensions and prevent violent conflict in the Wajir district; the increased acknowledgement of the contribution of women to peacemaking in their communities; a change in attitude among local police chiefs; and the incorporation of peace education in schools.<sup>14</sup> Besides Muslim peacebuilding actors, there is also a growing recognition of the contribution of women, and religious women in particular, to peacebuilding in Africa. There are a number of efforts underway to make these contributions more visible.<sup>15</sup> For example, the Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace (SWVP), formed in March 1994, contributed to peacebuilding in Sudan through peace

education programs and campaigns meant to raise awareness and prevent violence at the grassroots level.<sup>16</sup>

### *Inter-faith Peacebuilding Initiatives and Education for Peace*

Another major evolution in this field in recent decades is the multiplication of inter-faith peacebuilding initiatives and the progressive acknowledgment at the international level of their contribution to peacebuilding. In Sub-Saharan Africa, inter-faith organizations exist at the local, national, and international levels. Some of the most notable at the continental level are the African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL),—Religions for Peace, the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), and the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL). Multi-faith associations in peacebuilding have the potential to neutralize attempts to divide communities along religious lines.<sup>17</sup> They also go a long way to help “change the negative perceptions and suspicions that exist between the various religious communities,” and to engage in “dialogical action,” meaning “organized actions to transform the social structures of injustice within society.”<sup>18</sup> The Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA), based in Kenya, is one such organization. Its activities include advocacy, inter-faith dialogue, education, intermediation based on traditional Islamic justice, and conflict resolution mechanism of *Suluh* (the Arabic word for reconciliation), and traditional African methods of conflict management and resolution involving elders, chiefs, youth, and women.

## CASE STUDIES, KEY ISSUES, AND LESSONS LEARNED

Since inter-faith initiatives are the most prominent tool of religious peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa, this section probes two case studies: Côte d’Ivoire and the Central African Republic. Over the past two decades, Côte d’Ivoire and the Central African Republic have witnessed political crises involving the use of religion in contradictory ways: to justify violence and to build peace. These cases are a good illustration of what some scholars have termed the “ambivalence of religion.”<sup>19</sup> In Côte d’Ivoire, the timely intervention of religious leaders prevented the transformation of a political conflict into a religious one; in the Central African Republic they have been less successful.

### *Côte d'Ivoire*

Côte d'Ivoire, the economic and political locomotive of francophone West Africa, is still trying to recover from the political crisis that consumed the country throughout much of the 2000s. This crisis was essentially fueled by a power struggle tapping into identity politics, which almost took a religious turn. Most of the political and economic life of Côte d'Ivoire is concentrated in the southern part of the country, particularly in Abidjan, the economic capital, leaving the northern part of the country with fewer opportunities. This situation makes Northerners feel marginalized. Also, in popular perceptions, the South is mostly associated with Christianity whereas the North is linked with Islam, in spite of the fact a substantial number of Northerners have migrated to the South in search for economic opportunities. For this reason, the North/South divide is also presented as a Muslim/Christian divide. But, in spite of these underlying perceptions, Muslims and Christians mostly coexist peacefully.

The most recent general population census took place in 2014 and provides some data on the religious demography of Côte d'Ivoire's 22.7 million people (per a 2016 estimate) (Table 4.1).<sup>20</sup> What these statistics show is that although Muslims are the majority population in the country, more than half of them are immigrants from neighboring countries. This reality has sustained the idea of "the Muslim as a stranger" in popular perceptions in Côte d'Ivoire". However, given the intricacies of migration patterns in Côte d'Ivoire, distinguishing an Ivorian from a non-Ivorian, a distinction that is at the heart of nationalistic politics in Côte d'Ivoire, is not obvious. Indeed, a war of succession with nationalistic overtones followed the death of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the

**Table 4.1** Religious distribution of the population of Côte d'Ivoire

<i>Religions</i>	<i>Ivoirians</i>	<i>Non-Ivoirians</i>	<i>Percentage/Population</i>
All Christians	39.1	17.7	33.9
Muslims	33.7	72.7	42.9
Animists (Traditional religions)	4.4	0.9	3.6
Other religions	0.6	0.2	0.5
Without religion	22.2	8.5	19.1
	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Source* Institute National de la Statistique, *Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2014* (Côte d'Ivoire, 2014), [http://www.ins.ci/n/documents/RGPH2014\\_expo\\_dg.pdf](http://www.ins.ci/n/documents/RGPH2014_expo_dg.pdf)

first president of independent Côte d'Ivoire, in 1993. The conflict exacerbated ideological and social cleavages, culminating in an armed rebellion in 2002. The rebellion split the country into two, with the North, associated in collective representations with Muslims, on one side, and the South, linked with Christianity, on the other. Until then, followers of Islam, Christianity, and African traditional religions had, mostly coexisted peacefully in Côte d'Ivoire. But, from 1995 onwards, there were repeated attempts by successive ruling "Christian" presidents to exclude Alassane Ouattara, a Muslim linked to the North and labeled as a non-native Ivorian, from presidential contests. These attempts were the formalization of the policy of "Ivoirianess" (*ivoirité*) launched by Henri Konan Bédié upon taking office as President after the death of Houphouët-Boigny. The policy of Ivoirianess was the embodiment of identity politics meant to distinguish the "true" Ivorian from the non-Ivorian in a country with a large proportion of immigrants (about 25 percent).

The 2000 elections were contested principally by President Gbagbo and Ouattara. During the violent confrontations between the pro-Gbagbo and the pro-Ouattara factions in the aftermath of the elections, a mosque in the city of Abidjan was looted and burned down by youth associated with Gbagbo's party. In retaliation, a group of young people linked with Ouattara's party burned a Christian church in another part of the city. Following this, more Muslim dignitaries suspected to be close to Ouattara's camp and to the rebels in the North were assassinated in the South. In the space of three months, three imams were assassinated.<sup>21</sup> The risk of the conflict taking a sharp religious turn was real. Fortunately, most Muslim leaders never called for retaliation against Christians. Their only public complaint was that they were being targeted because of political feuds. Their restraint played a major role in preventing the conflict from degenerating into further inter-religious violence.

It is in a similar context conducive to religious conflict that the National Forum of Religious Denominations (*Forum National des Confessions Religieuses*) was launched in 1995. Indeed, religious leaders were concerned about the growing threat of the instrumentalization of religion for political purposes and wanted to prevent the transformation of a political crisis into a religious conflict. The Forum attracted around 20 different religious denominations including Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Muslims, adherents of African traditional religions, Bahai faith followers, and Harrists. Since its creation, the Forum has operated as a structure of religious mediation both between political opponents and

between religious denominations in an effort to promote social cohesion. Its main tools of social intervention include joint declarations to warn the faithful against the political manipulation of religion (especially in the aftermath of the destruction of mosques and other acts of violence targeting religious denominations), joint prayer sessions, and political mediation, as well as training and sensitization programs for the faithful. All these interventions seek to prevent conflict and promote social cohesion.

However, the Forum has faced a number of challenges. As a result of religious differences, some Protestants and Evangelicals refused to join the Forum, arguing that some of its members' religions are witchcraft or diabolical. The Forum has also been plagued by governance issues. For example, the founding text stipulated that the presidency is to rotate among religious denominations, but the first president of the Forum elected in 1995 ended up abolishing the rule thus causing the demission of some of its founding members.

### *The Central African Republic*

The Central African Republic has been plagued by conflict since independence in 1960. It is also one of the poorest countries in the world.

Table 4.2 shows that Christians constitute about 70 percent of the overall population whereas Muslims make up only 10 percent. Most Christians live in the South whereas the North is associated with Islam.

**Table 4.2** The religious distribution of the CAR population in 2003

Description	Overall (%)
Total	100
Catholics	28.9
Protestants	51.4
Muslims	10.1
Other religions	4.5
No religion	3.6
Unspecified	1.5

*Source* Bureau Central du Recensement, Direction Générale de la Statistique, des Études Économiques et Sociales, Ministère de l'Économie, du Plan et de la Coopération Internationale, *Résultats du Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitation Décembre 2003* (Central African Republic, 2003), [https://ireda.ceped.org/inventaire/ressources/caf-2003-rec-o\\_rca\\_en\\_chiffres.pdf](https://ireda.ceped.org/inventaire/ressources/caf-2003-rec-o_rca_en_chiffres.pdf)

The North is poorer than the South and has become the breeding ground for rebel groups that pose a major threat to the stability of the country.

The 2015 elections aimed to end the sectarian violence that exploded in 2013. The conflict centers on the violence between two militias: the Séléka,<sup>22</sup> linked with Islam, and the anti-Balaka,<sup>23</sup> associated with Christianity. Séléka appeared on the political scene of the Central African Republic in 2012 as a loose coalition of dissident political and rebel groups. The group lacked any clear political agenda—except their common objective to overthrow the then-head of state François Bozizé. Séléka finally succeeded in forcing him out of power in March 2013, and their leader Michel Djotodia took over as the new ruler of the country. Though the group was not predicated on religious affiliation, the rebel groups forming Séléka drew their membership from the country's marginalized North, which is predominantly Muslim. As a result, most of the combatants who overthrew Bozizé's regime were Muslims. Many explicitly targeted Christians and their properties in acts of violence and extortion, exacerbating communal tensions.

The anti-Balaka faction is a loosely structured set of self-defense groups that emerged in 2009, before the current crisis, to counter extortion and insecurity generated by organized armed robbery on the roads. Initially, it had neither a political nor a religious connotation. The group simply embodied a limited community response to a situation of insecurity that the weak state security apparatus was unable to address effectively. People felt they had to take responsibility for their own security. Once these groups emerged in a context of a weak and unstable state such as the Central African Republic, they were hard to control.

Following the *coup d'état* by the Séléka rebels in 2013, the anti-Balaka emerged once again as a grassroots response to the ensuing chaos. Muslims became the main targets for acts of revenge by anti-Balaka, who accused them of being accomplices to the crimes of the retreating Séléka. Since then anti-Balaka groups have terrorized Muslim communities suspected of cooperation with the dismantled Séléka, and thousands of Muslims have fled to neighboring countries.

Having acknowledged the religious tenor of the conflict, it is important to underline the fact that neither Séléka nor anti-Balaka qualify as a religious group from a sociological point of view. Neither of these groups

is institutionally related to a major religious organization. Nor do the groups appear to be pursuing a clear religious agenda, as do terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, or al-Shabaab. Furthermore, neither Séléka nor anti-Balaka has the open support of any major religious group inside or outside of the Central African Republic. And, because Christianity and Islam are not a monolithic reality in the Central African Republic, it is just as difficult to link Séléka with a particular Muslim group as it is to connect anti-Balaka with a particular Christian denomination. However, there are some suspicions among the population that some factions of anti-Balaka are being controlled and manipulated for political purposes by allies of the overthrown president, François Bozizé.

When the factional violence erupted in 2013 in the CAR, Cardinal Nzapalainga, the Archbishop of Bangui; Imam Oumar Kobine Layama, the President of the Islamic Community of CAR (CICA); and Reverend Pastor Nicolas Guerekoyame-Gbangou, the President of the Alliance of Evangelicals of CAR, came together to denounce attempts by the main instigators to transform a military and political conflict into an inter-religious conflict. As factional killings intensified, they became ambassadors for peace at the national and international levels. Their efforts led to the creation of the *Plateforme des Confessions Religieuses de Centrafrique* (PCRC) whose motto is, “For an interreligious approach to peace and social cohesion.”<sup>24</sup> In June 2016, the PCRC met to draft its foundational documents, including a charter, rules and procedures, as well as a strategic plan. Besides a board of directors, the governing structure of the PCRC comprises a permanent secretariat, various commissions, and regional branches. The three main denominations represented in the PCRC are Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. In addition to managing a website and running radio programs to educate the population on peacebuilding, they also intend to establish regional offices for outreach programs and grassroots engagement. The PCRC has become the backbone of the peace process in the Central African Republic. This is an especially critical role given that rebuilding the institutional infrastructure of the country will take years.

It remains to be seen how the PCRC will handle denominational differences within the organization and associated structures. This could also become a weakness that hinders sustainability. The PCRC is probably among the youngest national inter-religious platforms on the continent,

but it is also one of the most structured organizations, underpinned by a clear strategic plan. Its sustainability will depend on the ability of its leaders to maintain a united front around common objectives. But as donors pour in money, it might ignite inter-denominational competition for financial resources that could weaken the PCRC and undermine its credibility.

### *Religious Pluralism as a Challenge to Peaceful Coexistence*

The last three decades in Sub-Saharan Africa have been marked by a degree of political liberalization, leading to a boom in non-state organizations including many tied to Christianity and Islam. Some scholars have described the religious component of this evolution in terms of the fragmentation of the religious landscape of Africa.<sup>25</sup> The multiplication of religious organizations creates new challenges for the postcolonial state as far as the management of religion in the public space is concerned. Furthermore, until recently, Christian missionaries were the dominant religious actor in the public space in most of Sub-Saharan Africa. Today, myriad religious groups of different faiths operate in the public space through politics, social action, or social debates.<sup>26</sup> This competition for control of the public sphere is a major potential source of conflict.

### *Forms of Intolerance*

Religion can be used to promote violence or foster peace. African traditional religions are, however, only rarely associated with the former. Over the past 30 years, only a handful of neo-traditional movements have been associated with violence. These include among others the *Mai-Mai* in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the *Mungiki* in Kenya.<sup>27</sup> There are two main forms of religious intolerance in Sub-Saharan Africa today: *attitudinal*, which is often conveyed through religious-owned media outlets, propagating negative portrayals of the “other” to increase their following,<sup>28</sup> or aspects of modernity (especially regarding sexuality and family laws)<sup>29</sup>; and *repressive*, which is associated with various religious-inspired terror groups, such as the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda or Boko Haram in Nigeria.<sup>30</sup>

### *Muslim Peacebuilding*

There is a growing awareness of the differences in peacebuilding across different faiths. Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic are two examples of a broader trend in inter-faith initiatives, where Christians and secular leaders take the lead and Muslims play secondary roles. Indeed, lamenting the low visibility of Muslim peacebuilding actors, Mohammed Abu-Nimer and S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana write:

The lack of systematic studies that identify and analyze the contributions and shortcomings of Muslim peace-building actors working toward peace in their communities creates the impression that there are no peace-building organizations or institutions in the Muslim world. ... Indeed, there are quite a number of nongovernmental organizations, as well as local leaders around the Muslim world, working in their communities to resolve conflicts, build peace, and encourage interfaith dialogue.<sup>31</sup>

Explaining the reasons for their relative obscurity, they add,

Muslim peacebuilding organizations have less experience with formally constituted bodies and stable institutions. For that reason, it is not easy to identify Muslim peace-building NGOs or other institutions similar to those in the West. Nevertheless, in many Muslim societies, NGOs in the modern sense are a new phenomenon, evolving because of contacts with Western/Christian institutions.<sup>32</sup>

Issues around Muslim leadership of peacebuilding initiatives have come into sharper focus due to two interconnected trends: groups identifying with Islam are responsible for more violent attacks than those identifying with Christianity, particularly as it relates to violent extremism; and Muslims comprise a higher number of victims of those attacks than Christians.

Most conflicts generally described as “inter-religious” are rarely primarily about religion. More often, religion is used to articulate perceived political, social, and economic marginalization and the related feelings of frustration.<sup>33</sup> In Sub-Saharan Africa, recent terrorist attacks notwithstanding, religious intolerance is, almost always, expressed nonviolently. Peaceful coexistence of Africa’s religiously diverse communities is the norm, as it has been for generations. This tradition, exploited wisely, can strengthen a culture of peace and social cohesion in Africa. Moreover, trusted religious leaders can be more effective in peacebuilding,

especially in mediation processes, than secular authorities. “Local religious actors embedded within communities,” it is argued, “can often draw on a reservoir of trust not available to secular actors.”<sup>34</sup>

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The politics of inclusion paired with the dispensation of social justice and the respect for human rights remain the cornerstones of any peacebuilding endeavor. In Sub-Saharan Africa, religious leaders and organizations are actively involved in advocacy initiatives for the promotion of social justice and peace.<sup>35</sup> In some Christian circles, for example, advocacy for the just distribution of natural resources is seen as an integral dimension of peacebuilding.<sup>36</sup> Muslim traditions have their own indigenous mechanisms for peacebuilding such as *sulha* (or *suluh*), and African traditional religions are rich in rituals of reconciliation to restore social harmony. These are resources to build on. More specifically, for the purpose of this chapter, there are three key policy issues that demand the urgent attention of policymakers and religious peacebuilders.<sup>37</sup>

- 1. Pay more attention to attitudinal intolerance.** Policymakers tend to focus on violent forms of religious intolerance. More attention needs to be given to how such violence is seeded, through attitudes promoted in communities, schools and, especially, faith-based media. Funding intolerant attitudes also comes into play at the transnational level, where various global networks are responsible for propagating negative depictions of the “other” at the grassroots level. Thus, efforts to counter hate and build comity cannot be restricted to the elite.<sup>38</sup> A focus on inter-religious and inter-ethnic encounters at the community level will enhance societal resilience and help prevent intolerance from gaining a foothold.
- 2. Give more assistance to muslim peacebuilding.** As radicalized interpretations of religious traditions have gained wider attention through social media, the tendency to equate religion, especially Islam, with heinous acts of terrorism—from Somalia and Kenya through to the Sahel and North Africa—has grown in Africa. Greater effort needs to be invested in the communities that are most affected—both in a perceptual sense, by the misconceptions; and in a practical sense, due to suffering disproportionately from such attacks. “One way to counter these radical and militant voices

is,” some experts argue, “to engage with and strengthen the peace-building capacity of Muslim actors that focus on Islamic conflict resolution and Muslim peacemaking traditions.”<sup>39</sup> This means concretely supporting the efforts of these actors in spreading the Islamic culture of peace and conflict resolution and “requires understanding specific characteristic of Muslim peace-building actors, their strengths and the challenges they face.”<sup>40</sup>

3. *Promote inter-religious socialization and leadership for peace.* Although inter-faith initiatives are mushrooming on the African continent, they need more coordination and networking. In the future national, regional, and continental organizations will need to mainstream inter-religious efforts in a more preventive approach in order to promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence. In most cases, inter-faith initiatives are launched as an ad hoc solution to an escalating conflict. A more sustainable solution would be to establish regional and national offices to coordinate inter-faith efforts for peacebuilding. These efforts should involve continental institutions such as the African Union and sub-regional bodies. Additionally, religious peacebuilders should receive more training in conflict resolution; typically, they know the local terrain much better and are more influential in communities than “outsiders.” The professionalization of religious peacebuilders will also make cooperation with secular bodies more effective. It is equally important to educate and sensitize diplomats and international mediators on the place of religion in Africa today, especially in relation to violence and peacemaking.<sup>41</sup>

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## CHAPTER 5

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# Field Reflections on Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Social Imperatives of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

*Betty O. Bigombe*

## INTRODUCTION

War does not end when the guns go silent. Christopher Cramer called this post-violence period, “the Great Post-Conflict Makeover Fantasy,” and “the continuation of war by other means.”<sup>1</sup> Many war-like frontiers of contestation and negotiation open as soon as the guns fall silent. By the end of violent conflicts, infrastructures are broken down. People’s modes of subsistence and access to medical care and education are completely shattered. War disrupts the rhythm of normal life by destabilizing the flow of essential supplies such as food and water. This is exacerbated

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This chapter represents the personal views of the author.

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by the disruption of social and cultural securities often found in family and society. The failure to quickly ensure that necessities are restored can result in renewed violence. Post-conflict mediation interventions must, therefore, be underpinned by a singular aim: entrenching sustainable peace.

## DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION, AND REINTEGRATION

The terms disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) are often deployed in studies and projects relating to peacekeeping in a “post-conflict” environment. Whether any place ever gets into a “post-conflict” moment is an open question. The term “reconstruction” after conflict has also been queried many times, with critics wondering whether societies ever “reconstruct” or simply “transform.”<sup>2</sup> By the end of war, it is difficult to return to the exactness, sometimes even the semblance, of what previously existed. New centers of power emerge, and social and cultural norms are often transformed by the end of war, making any claims to “reconstruction” rather difficult. Roger Mac Ginty provides us with a definition that attempts to capture the implications behind “post-conflict reconstruction,” in a more comprehensive fashion:

[R]econstruction encompasses short-term relief and long-term development. It extends far beyond physical reconstruction to include the provision of livelihoods, the introduction of a new or reformed type of governance and repairing fractured societal relationships.<sup>3</sup>

Critically, it emphasizes that reconstruction is not merely a technocratic exercise, but rather

it is an acutely political activity with the potential to effect profound social and cultural change. Post-war reconstruction holds the capacity to remodel the nature of interaction between the citizen and the state, the citizens and the public goods, and the citizens and the market.<sup>4</sup>

Mac Ginty, thus, seeks to draw our attention to how the lives of ex-combatants and victims can be transformed.

I intend to place my conversation on DDR into the above definition, as a process meant for both short-term relief and long-term development, but with potential for “social and cultural change.” Kees Kingma, reflecting on the reintegration element, has noted that “reintegration is

not one general process, but consists of thousands of micro-stories, with individual and group efforts, and with setbacks and successes.”<sup>5</sup> These different stories and actors seek, among other things, to repair fractured societal relations as ex-combatants return to their villages and reunite with their families. That is, returning victims to normal civilian lives. The United Nations (UN) says of DDR:

The goal of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) as a process of removing weapons from the hands of combatants, taking the combatants out of military structures and helping them to integrate socially and economically into society, thereby seeking to support ex-combatants so that they can become active participants in the peace process.<sup>6</sup>

In other cases, the term DDR is used for the long-term goal of ensuring permanent disarmament and sustainable peace. Often, ex-combatants are helped to enter job placement services, participate in skills training and credit schemes, and get the education needed to secure a decent living and livelihood.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of armed conflicts, different sets of victims emerge. These include the main victims of war: ordinary people caught up in the crossfire of warring factions. Many end up either as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in camps or as refugees in another country. Those inside the IDP camps, including children, are often directly impacted by violence—in the form of physical injuries like bullet wounds or broken limbs—or conflict-related stresses such as limited access to food and water or loss of parents and other family members. Children are also exposed to trauma and other forms of stress, diseases, and complications such as malnutrition. Women inside the camps also face very specific sets of challenges, including rape and forced marriages, and the resulting unwanted pregnancies. With their husbands killed in conflict, many women are forced to take on the role of breadwinner. There are also child mothers, especially victims of rape, who will be forever haunted by the horrors of war.

The aftermath of war also presents another set of victims in the form of former combatants on either side of the conflict. Child soldiers—defined as persons under 18 years of age, who are often recruited in times of conflict either as combatants or to perform other support roles<sup>8</sup>—and defeated combatants are especially prone to victimization in the post-conflict period. Civil wars typically draw in fighters from many different parts of society, most of whom would never consider a career in the

military. They have to be reintegrated back into civilian life. For those potentially interested in military careers, rarely are post-conflict armed forces able to absorb all former combatants into its ranks. Aside from budget constraints, there is a normative push to reduce the size of militaries after wartime.

This chapter focuses on post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction strategies after conflict has ended. It looks at processes of rehabilitation, demobilization, and reintegration for returning different categories of people victimized by the conflict to civilian life. The normative assumption underpinning the analysis below is that peacebuilding should, among other objectives, seek to return ex-combatants to an existence as close to what they experienced before violence disrupted their lives.

### CASE STUDIES: UGANDA AND BURUNDI

To highlight some of the challenges, lessons learned, and best practices, this chapter delves into two contrasting case studies of DDR: Uganda and Burundi. Specifically, this author draws heavily on her firsthand involvement in two key initiatives across these countries: the voluntary demobilization of close to 40,000 National Resistance Army (NRA) fighters in Uganda from 1993–1996, and the reintegration of child soldiers after Burundi's civil war in 2001–2004. The concluding recommendations flow from deep reflection on these difficult and complex experiences.

A main contention of the chapter is that the failure of reintegration and rehabilitation is rarely down to one big factor but instead typically involves a number of smaller failings: exclusively “rewarding” combatants in grand schemes while ignoring non-combatant victims; a mismatch between the economic potential of the environment and the intervention packages (e.g., when re-skilling is done without due regard for extant opportunities in the market); cultural nuances, including ethnic rivalries at play; and privileging seniority in economic re-empowerment (which often takes precedence over everything else). Lastly, the chapter illustrates that psycho-social support needs to move hand-in-hand with economic reconstruction. It is neither one nor the other, rather one after the other.

### *Uganda Veteran Assistance Programme*

Between 1992 and 1995, the Government of Uganda embarked on the demobilization and subsequent reintegration into productive civilian life of 36,358 soldiers out of an estimated 90,000-member NRA army. The project was named the Uganda Veteran Assistance Programme (UVAP). The UVAP had a dual mandate: help reduce the size of the army, thereby reducing government expenditure, and help ex-combatants return to productive civilian life as a way of transitioning from conflict to peace. The focus of the analysis here is the latter.<sup>9</sup> The UVAP process of reintegrating the 36,358 soldiers was undertaken in three phases starting with 23,903 soldiers, then 9,308 soldiers, and finally 4,147 soldiers.<sup>10</sup>

According to some analysts, the government intended “to shift the burden of its public expenditure away from its earlier emphasis on defense and security to the promotion of social and economic development.”<sup>11</sup> But since this project followed a period of civil war, and many ex-combatants had been integrated into the NRA force as a strategy aimed, in part, at keeping them from returning to violence, the project was then viewed as an initiative in peacebuilding. Indeed, after 15 years of civil war, Uganda was a war-torn and ravaged economy and society.

In terms of financing, emphasis was still on security; national defense expenditure continued to rise, going from 28 percent in 1986 to 43 percent in 1991. This was unsustainable for a country just emerging from war. The World Bank noted that in the same period, capital expenditure on defense rose from 18 to 38 percent of government’s contribution to development. At the time, the explanation for this increase was that:

These expenditure increases initially reflect the assimilation of defeated rebel forces and later the deliberate professionalization of the regular army through, for example, the establishment of a command structure, personnel and logistics systems, training, and the acquisition of necessary equipment and supplies as much as new recruitment.<sup>12</sup>

With most armed insurrections concluded around 1991—except Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebellion, which was then in its infancy—government sought to reduce expenditure on the military. Veterans, who constituted a “vulnerable group” facing myriad difficulties, would be given a chance to seek voluntary retirement from the army. The problems confronting ex-combatants were often like those of the general public: lack of shelter, lack of self-reliance skills, little money, and so on.

But most of the ex-combatants did not enjoy the social capital of ordinary citizens, gained through being part of rural communities and comparatively broad social and cultural relations. Substantial assistance was thus required to help ex-soldiers cope with life after the military.

As a process aimed at reintegration, soldiers were to receive help toward resettling among their families and would be facilitated socially and economically into a peaceful, productive, and sustainable civilian life. The category “voluntary” and those marked for “reduction in establishment” constituted the largest percentage of veterans who would be returned to civilian life. However, it was also estimated that one in five of those who were demobilized had medical reasons for being discharged (irrespective of the other reasons offered for their demobilization). The program of reintegrating veterans back into the communities was divided into transitional safety nets including entitlements, reintegration initiatives, and administration. Each of these stages was associated with a different package ranging from cash to agricultural input. These were categorized as follows (Table 5.1).

With enormous support from the World Bank, this reintegration process worked well in the beginning but subsequently experienced several challenges. Although most problems stemmed from a lack of resources—e.g., insufficient money to buy cows, pay school fees for their children or bury their deceased kindred—some were conceptual. One erroneous assumption was that the veterans were “homogenous and their needs similar in nature. Individual problems, place of origin, period of

**Table 5.1** Components of the Uganda Veteran Assistance Programme

<i>Transitional safety nets</i>	<i>Reintegration initiatives</i>	<i>Administration</i>
Cash payment	Severely disabled assistance package	Discharge and transport (demobilization)
Clothing allowance	Scholarship training fund	Personal costs (UVAB and districts)
Food allowance	Social communication package	Non-personal costs (UVAB and districts)
Healthcare	Counselling and economic information support	Auditing and accounting
Per diem		Monitoring and evaluation
Agricultural supplies		Institutional development
Shelter (iron sheets and ridges in kind, other support in cash)		
Education fees for children		
Enhanced healthcare fund		

*Source* Adapted from Nat J. Colletta, Markus Kostner, and Ingo Wiederhofer, “Case Studies in War-to-Peace Transition,” World Bank Discussion Papers, no. 331 (1996), <https://doi.org/10.1596/0-8213-3674-6>

service, and rank were all disregarded as a basis for classifying individual needs.”<sup>13</sup>

### *The Structural Challenges with the Uganda Veteran Assistance Programme*

There were several significant challenges with the UVAP system, including challenges relating to the communities to which the veterans were being returned as well as those relating to the packages provided to veterans. Firstly, most of the packages were provided in the form of cash, not in-kind as had been planned. However, most of the packages, especially those under the transitional safety nets, were too small in comparison to the needs of the veterans and often given out in installments.<sup>14</sup> Many veterans grumbled that the USH 150,000 (roughly US \$40 in 2020) was not enough to meet their basic needs, let alone invest in something to secure their future.<sup>15</sup>

Most soldiers had health challenges, but many of them were unable to access medical care after they left the military. The number of soldiers discharged on medical grounds was about 75,000, at a time when HIV/AIDS was sweeping through Uganda like a bush fire on a windy day. The World Bank study noted that 1,696 soldiers died due to HIV/AIDS in the immediate aftermath of discharge. The challenge of accessing medical care was further complicated by the difficulties with finding food, as many had to choose between the two—medicine or food—as their financial packages were often insufficient to cover both. That the UVAP budget and cash packages did not include the veterans’ families, who had hitherto received help from government, was a big oversight and shortcoming of the program. Further, the many veterans had neither education nor the requisite survival skills for the world they had been plunged into. The World Bank study noted:

Only slightly more than a quarter of phase II veterans have secondary or higher education; 12 percent had no formal education, and approximately half finished primary school. Of phase I veterans, 70 percent have not progressed beyond primary education. Although more than half of phase II veterans stated that they acquired skills while in the army, most of these skills are not marketable. Only 13 percent possess skills in mechanics, metal work, woodworking, or tailoring. Only 34 percent of phase II veterans

possess cash cropping skills, whereas 50 percent know how to undertake subsistence farming. No more than 4 percent are familiar with cattle raising.

The study goes on to suggest that it is, consequently, hardly surprising that

71 percent of phase II veterans intended to go back to farming on resettlement. Nineteen percent envisaged activities in commerce and production. Two months after phase II resettlement, 73 percent were actually active in farming; however, 11 percent ended up as agricultural day laborers or unpaid family workers (against 1 percent intended), suggesting that around 1,000 veterans had to lower their expectations substantially. Economic reintegration, thus, proves the most elusive of all problems facing a veteran on resettlement, although personal and social attitudes can ease this process.<sup>16</sup>

The picture that emerges is one of colossal failure insofar as the economic reintegration of veterans. Many would depend on land to survive yet the UVAP failed to make land available to the demobilized soldiers or to provide them with farming knowledge and skills.

Since the start of the conflict in 1980, many of the veterans had not returned home to visit their families. Long absences made their reintegration difficult; a lot had changed while they were away. Relatives also erroneously believed that due to their military service, the returnees were comparatively well off. In other cases, the violence soldiers experienced traveled, metaphorically, back with them to their old homes, creating fear and suspicion of them in communities. This stigmatization led to high levels of frustration and depression among ex-combatants.

On land and the return to families and communities, Colleta et al. note:

Forty percent of phase II veterans did not have a house of their own on return to their home community. The majority of this group, a third of the total, lived with relatives. On the other hand, most veterans were able to secure access to land for cultivation. Only 826 cases of landlessness (or 9 percent of phase II veterans) were reported until October 1994. Around one-quarter had private land (23 percent), one-third had family land (34 percent) while another third (31 percent) had both family and private land.

Under phase I, an estimated 700 veterans could not find access to land (although data may be incomplete).

Overall, the authors suggest that the number of those landless may be less than 3 percent, which

allays initial concerns expressed mainly by the donor community, although containing severe individual reintegration difficulties. A noteworthy fact is that almost one-third (31 percent) of phase II veterans did not have home contact since 1991. Another 22 percent visited home only once; thus, it can be assumed that knowledge about the specific location of resettlement is limited to nonexistent in many instances, aggravating the challenge of reintegration.<sup>17</sup>

In the end, frustration led many of these demobilized soldiers into either a menial existence or not returning to their communities for months after demobilization.

Although there were fewer cases of failed land access reported in the final two phases of demobilization, a number of veterans did not have land to till. In providing farm equipment, the government assumed that veterans would be returning to familial lands. Often this was not the case. Many veterans tried to avail themselves of public land through an arrangement set up by UVAB at the district level.<sup>18</sup> Long and painstaking, the process of transferring public land proved prohibitively expensive. In cases where veterans could access family land, strife among family members often ensued.

Of deeper, societal significance was the sense that communities were being “punished twice.” In contrast to Eritrea, where its soldiers in the early 1990s war against Ethiopia were celebrated as liberators,<sup>19</sup> in Uganda, communities were negatively disposed toward returnees, who were often seen as having been responsible for widespread suffering. The idea that they should be helped (financially and otherwise) to settle back into normal life was anathema to many. This perception greatly complicated the reintegration process.

The dismal experience of the NRA’s demobilization is a stark reminder that victims in communities cannot be ignored. Friction between them and veterans is the source of considerable trauma and depression, which can quietly engulf the lives of so many affected by war.

## REINTEGRATION OF BURUNDI'S CHILD SOLDIERS

The conflict and tensions between the ethnic Hutu and Tutsi in Burundi have a long history. Mostly, they spring from the historical privileging of Tutsis over Hutus since independence. Violence escalated in 1993 when the first democratically elected president of Burundi, a Hutu, Melchior Ndadaye, was killed in a coup. This prompted the formation of Hutu militias to fight the Tutsi political opposition, which was backed by the Tutsi-dominated military. Throughout this period, both sides have recruited child soldiers into their ranks. In 2002, the Government of Burundi and then-rebel leader Pierre Nkurunziza signed a ceasefire agreement under the auspices of the African Union, which was headed by former South African President Nelson Mandela.

By the end of the fighting, UNICEF estimated that over 6,000 children had participated in these conflicts, including some as young as eight years old.<sup>20</sup> All of them needed to be disarmed and reintegrated into civilian life. However, to properly reintegrate them, there was a need to understand their motivation for joining the armed ranks. According to Allison Dilworth, for many children, joining the conflict:

[Was] a way of countering decades of social and ethnic discrimination, and of ending years of repression by the “Tutsi army” with its history of massacring Hutu. Many volunteer recruits had been directly affected by the conflict, either seeing the murder of family and neighbours or being forced to leave their homes. Some children were reportedly encouraged by their families to join, sometimes after receiving payment or in the belief that payment would be forthcoming... Others reportedly joined partly as a result of social or peer pressure.<sup>21</sup>

There were also other forms of recruitment such as coercion and abduction from schools.

The FDD (*Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie*, the military wing of the leading rebel group) recruited directly from schools, which were also attacked and destroyed, a tactic that may have facilitated the recruitment of children. An already low level of schooling dropped significantly during the war and the majority of child soldier recruits are thought not to have been enrolled in schools.

In addition to recruitment and abduction within Burundi, Dilworth adds

...the FDD recruited child soldiers from refugee camps, particularly in Tanzania and the DRC... further recruitment and a number of mass abductions took place from schools, including the abduction of nearly 300 children from schools in Ruyigi and Kayanza provinces in November 2001. Most, but not all, returned home shortly afterwards. Children as young as eight are known to have been recruited, sometimes forcibly.<sup>22</sup>

The motivation for recruitment, and the difference in age among the child soldiers, were not factored into reintegration efforts. Those who joined after encouragement from families would be seen as heroes fighting the enemy, and their reintegration had to take an entirely different form. Those who joined when they were too young but had spent years in the conflict would have matured with exposure to adult-like practices and behaviors, and their reintegration needed to take a different approach. As the ceasefire was being signed, the Government of Burundi, with assistance from UNICEF, launched a plan to help disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate child soldiers into civilian life. As Dilworth has noted, there were serious problems with the effort, including:

[Lack] of focus in programs for the prevention of re-recruitment; treating battle-hardened 18 year olds as children rather than adults; and lack of long-term reintegration strategies including vocational training. At the community level, attitudes towards former child soldiers appear to vary from considering them as victims of the conflict, to fearing them due to their violence and brutalization through involvement in the war. Economic factors were perceived to be key to the successful and sustained reintegration of former child soldiers.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, while work was underway to identify the child soldiers, it never registered that their ethnic kin viewed them as heroes. Relatedly, attention was not paid to child soldiers whom the government had turned into local defense units called Peace Guards, yet this was equally troubling for the impact that it had on these children. This was especially important as the government took the position that it had no child soldiers in its ranks, just children “under its protection.” Dilworth suggests further that:

No significant demobilization or reintegration of FDD child soldiers took place prior to these programs. Child soldiers who deserted from the FDD

were largely incorporated into the Peace Guards militia, exposing them to new dangers and trauma.<sup>24</sup>

In most cases, more time was spent speaking with officials in the capital, Bujumbura, who did not have a good feel for what had happened on the ground, than was spent in communities where child soldiers actually were. Rarely were the child soldiers consulted on what should be done. Many times, child soldiers had been tasked to kill the “other”—for example, a Hutu grandmother of a Tutsi grandson. Yet the reintegration efforts never addressed the issue of intermarriage among the two ethnic groups, which was common. Psycho-social healing for those children who had been involved or had witnessed the killing of family members of the “other” ethnic group was never provided.

The sequencing and timeframe for the reintegration efforts was another key challenge. Often victims were asked to speak about their trauma and suffering at very short notice. For former child soldiers whose indoctrination/conscription into armed conflict often occurred over years, this was wholly misguided. Once again, as in the case of Uganda, the inordinate focus on economic reconstruction meant that key aspects of reintegration at the individual level were all but ignored.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the record of DDR efforts in Africa over the last 30 years, and especially the author’s engagement with the two case studies outlined above, a few recommendations for improving the reintegration element of DDR are offered below.

1. *Assess and balance the needs of ex-combatants.* The assumption that veterans, ex-combatants, and child soldiers need financial support more than other forms of rehabilitation needs reconsideration. There is a need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach that includes personal, educational, and physical and mental health elements. Arguably, the most critical missing component in DDR efforts has been psycho-social well-being. Violent conflicts often cause considerable trauma to victims and combatants. Even if economic reintegration occurs, the mental and emotional scars of conflict will always have the potential to ruin lives if left unaddressed. This is especially important for child soldiers.

2. *Address the tenuous state of funding for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.* Financing and resourcing of DDR efforts in Africa have been dominated by donor funding. Yet this is often tenuous and unsustainable over the long term. The over-reliance on donors means that the reintegration efforts are often of a much shorter timeline than required by the scale and scope of the challenge. Appropriate re-skilling of veterans, adult education, or offers of education support to younger ex-combatants or child soldiers would be cheaper and more sustainable if African governments provided long-term funding (especially in the absence of donor funding). African countries need to find mechanisms to assume more of the financial burden of continuing reintegration efforts.
3. *Reconsider a one-size-fits-all approach to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.* Reintegration interventions have tended to assume a great deal of homogeneity of target groups. Women and men, boys and girls (child soldiers), young and old, urban and rural, all receive essentially the same assistance packages. Intervention projects should instead seek to disaggregate the different categories of people needing support or impacted by conflict, determine their needs, and structure intervention programs accordingly. In Uganda, for example, veterans returning to Buganda, where land has been properly parceled with a clear tenure system, required a different approach than what was needed by veterans returning elsewhere, where land is still communal and family-owned. Differences in cultures with respect to rituals around cleansing of evil spirits also demand proper attention, as this often determines levels of acceptance in the recipient community.
4. *Implement better accounting of local opportunities and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.* There is a need to understand better the economic and other opportunities that exist in the regions and communities to which people are being reintegrated. For example, it was an oversight for the Uganda Veteran Assistance Programme not to give sufficient farming education to veterans returning to villages, and business education to those reintegrating into urban locations. Interestingly, these items had been planned, but insufficient attention was paid to them since they were deemed of little consequence. This partly explains why some veterans quickly ran out of funds and their businesses collapsed.

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## CHAPTER 6

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# United Nations Peacekeeping, Human Rights, and the Protection of Civilians

*Ibrahim J. Wani*

With the increasing trend toward human rights violations and the displacement of civilian populations in conflict, the protection of civilians has become an essential part of peacekeeping.<sup>1</sup> This trend has been dictated by the changing circumstances of conflict and is supported by the international normative order and global human rights framework.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on lessons from United Nations (UN)-led peacekeeping operations in Africa,<sup>3</sup> this chapter discusses the background and evolution of peacekeeping engagement on issues related to human rights and the protection of civilians; the array of norms and institutions that have developed to formalize the mandate in the UN peacekeeping framework; and experiences, lessons, and challenges in its implementation.

Despite some notable achievements, much remains to be done to bridge the gap between rhetoric and concrete actions so that civilians are not, as they all-too-often are, treated as fodder in conflict.<sup>4</sup> It is

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a challenging and complex undertaking, confronting intractable political problems in countries where communities are deeply fragmented, mechanisms for conflict mediation and resolution are lacking, and state institutions barely functioning. This is sometimes complicated by the fact that the state itself may be an enabler, if not directly complicit, in violence against civilians. At the international level, the protection of civilians also suffers from uncertain political support, conceptual uncertainty, and other inherent contradictions in its normative and political framework. On a positive note, there is growing awareness—evidenced by regular reviews and robust debates—that this important undertaking remains a work in progress. Nevertheless, there is a crucial need for a meaningful dialogue to seek consensus and address the fundamental challenges and internal contradictions highlighted below.

### THE BASIS OF THE MANDATE

UN peacekeeping engagement with human rights, and the attendant problems of internal displacement and refugees, was in large part compelled by the horrors of the 1990s, particularly the 1994 Rwanda genocide and the massacre of Bosnians a year later at Srebrenica in the former Yugoslavia. Until then, peacekeeping was largely affixed to its original conception as a limited instrument interposed between conflicting parties and playing a rather passive role. The specter of a noticeable international presence watching or, worse, fleeing while hundreds of thousands of helpless civilians were massacred evoked outrage and shame, challenged the credibility and legitimacy of the UN and the global peace and security order,<sup>5</sup> and triggered critical reviews of peacekeeping.<sup>6</sup>

The result was the pledge to “never again” allow a repeat of such atrocities as Rwanda and Srebrenica and the declaration that the international community had a duty to intervene when such circumstances arose. UN peacekeeping was the obvious instrument of intervention. As the UN Secretary-General noted in his report to the General Assembly at the time,

[t]he plight of civilians is no longer something which can be neglected, or made secondary because it complicates political negotiations or interests. It is fundamental to the central mandate of the Organization. The responsibility for the protection of civilians cannot be transferred to others. The

United Nations is the only international organization with the reach and authority to end these practices.<sup>7</sup>

Despite these laudable affirmations, civilians continued to suffer gruesome atrocities in conflicts, which, in turn, drew UN peacekeeping into the inevitable undertaking of human rights protection. Recent conflicts in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali, South Sudan, and Sudan illustrate this trend. Since December 2013, the Security Council has progressively reinforced the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) as the human rights situation has deteriorated. The glimmer of hope that greeted South Sudan's independence in 2011 following more than five decades of conflict soon faded when another round of conflict, one of the most brutal and destructive conflicts of the twenty-first century, flared up in December 2013. The conflict has been characterized by revenge killings, sexual and gender-based violence, the recruitment of child soldiers, the destruction of homes and other personal property, and the forcible displacement of more than half of the country's population.

South Sudan is perhaps an extreme example, but similar phenomena exist where UN peacekeeper are deployed in large numbers. In the CAR, civilians are caught up in the ferocious conflict between the anti-Balaka and Séléka, thousands have been killed and many are displaced within the country and other neighboring countries. The multiple armed groups and government forces in the DRC continuously target civilians, particularly in the eastern part of the country. In Mali, the Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and affiliated insurgent groups have continuously attacked and killed civilians, and in Darfur, for more than a decade now, civilians have been targeted and killed or forced into camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

The so-called "CNN effect," which projects the horrors of conflict into living rooms around the world in real time,<sup>8</sup> puts pressure on governments, the UN system, and the international community to do something to halt gross violations of human rights. The presence of a UN peacekeeping operation on the ground has often been the logical and most cost-effective response mechanism. Where no peacekeeping mission existed, the UN was compelled to establish one.

Ironically, the presence of the UN on the ground, in turn, has fostered the expectation that it will provide protection to the civilian population. The failure to fulfill this expectation is perceived as a potentially

serious blemish on the credibility and legitimacy of the UN and the international system that could undermine its central purpose to facilitate and support a peace process. In other words, UN peacekeeping has become the instrument of last resort in situations of human rights and humanitarian crises. Beyond this practical dimension, UN peacekeeping engagement on human rights and the protection of civilians and refugees is also considered integral and essential to its primary mission and core purpose of securing peace. Systematic human rights violations and the displacement of populations are not only a result of the conflict; experience also shows that they perpetuate conflict. Peace cannot be realized when civilians do not feel secure and safe, and public confidence, which is essential to the realization of sustainable peace and security, cannot exist when civilians are systematically and consistently threatened or abused.

## THE NORMATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

In 1999, the United Nations Security Council explicitly mandated the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) to “take the necessary action... within its capabilities and areas of deployment, to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.”<sup>9</sup> Every UN peacekeeping mission established since then has had an explicit mandate from the Security Council to protect civilians,<sup>10</sup> (only four out of the fourteen active UN peacekeeping operations do not have the explicit mandate to protect civilians).<sup>11</sup> An elaborate body of norms, policies, and institutions across the UN system, which includes the UN Charter and the global human rights and humanitarian laws framework, Security Council resolutions and pronouncements, and internal UN policies and guidelines, supports the formalization and operationalization of human rights and the protection of civilians as priorities for UN peacekeeping.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND TRACK RECORD

Nearly 20 years of UN peacekeeping experience with the protection of civilians and human rights, most of it in Africa, has been extensively documented and reviewed. The most recent such review was by the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (HIPPO).<sup>12</sup> While there have been no incidents of the magnitude of the Rwanda genocide—although conflict in South Sudan has been described

as “genocide” by some—the plight of civilians in conflict has been increasingly brought to the fore through actions by peacekeepers, including when the presence or action by a peacekeeping mission has arguably saved civilians. Overall, however, the experience has been unsatisfactory.

At the political level, the UN Security Council has been more responsive to civilian atrocities and is more likely to deploy a peacekeeping operation when there is widespread violence and systematic human rights violations, as the CAR mission (MINUSCA) illustrates. Enforcement mandates which empower peacekeepers to intervene with armed actors in order to protect civilians are also more common. The Security Council is also frequently engaging on human rights and refugee issues, highlighting their importance in peace and security.

There is some evidence that peacekeeping has reduced the occurrence, duration, and intensity of conflict as well as the likelihood of a resurgence of conflict.<sup>13</sup> The presence of a peacekeeping force has also been cited as an important deterrent and confidence builder, dissuading attacks against civilians and supporting the settlement of displaced civilians and the return and resettlement of refugees.<sup>14</sup>

In Angola, Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Namibia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, UN peacekeeping made positive contributions to the protection of civilians. Through mediation and assisting reconciliation processes, supporting elections and democratization, helping establish the rule of law, and facilitating the repatriation and resettlement of internally displaced civilians and refugees, tangible improvements were made to the lives of ordinary citizens in these countries.

At the same time, plenty of data suggests that claims of “peacekeeping successes” may be exaggerated. Often much vaunted successes are short-lived, many conflicts tend to relapse, not least because peacekeeping operations typically do not address the underlying issues which gave rise to conflict in the first place.<sup>15</sup>

## LESSONS AND CHALLENGES

Extensive reviews of the record of UN peacekeeping the protection of civilians identify several important lessons and challenges. Besides the complexity of the mandate and the difficult environment under which peacekeeping operations are deployed,<sup>16</sup> key issues include:

- i. The uncertainty of political support for peacekeeping involvement in human rights;
- ii. ambiguities surrounding the scope of the mandate; and
- iii. lack of coherence and a common understanding around the challenges of multidimensional peacekeeping operations, in particular the problem of overcrowded agendas, resource constraints and limited capabilities and issues related to leadership.

The wide scope of responsibilities and tasks in multidimensional peacekeeping operations has a particular impact on human rights and protection of civilians. In addition to the primary mission of facilitating a peace process, the typical peacekeeping operation is required to support the extension of state authority, capacity building, the rule of law, building a police force, gender integration, child protection, and support to civil society and non-governmental organizations, just to name a few. These are all considered priorities, which means that the protection of civilians and human rights has to compete with dozens of other priorities for attention, political support, and resources. Moreover, the various mandates and tasks require different skills and capabilities and many tend to overlap and are expressed in vague terms, which the different units interpret in different ways.<sup>17</sup>

Budget and resource constraints also have a significant impact on human rights and protection of civilians. There is a legitimate concern about the cost of peacekeeping, which in the last few years has averaged between US \$7–8 billion annually, most of which is borne by about ten countries. High as it is, almost every analysis has pointed out that the peacekeeping budget is grossly inadequate for the multitude of tasks that missions are expected to perform.<sup>18</sup> The human rights component of the mandate tends to receive a minuscule share of the budget.

### ***Uncertain Political Commitment and Support***

In moral and normative terms, it is tempting to assume a high degree of political support and commitment to the protection of civilians and human rights in peacekeeping. Yet weak political support is the norm. This is partly a function of the way the protection mandate has developed, but it is also a reflection of the general ambivalence at the global level about human rights, sovereignty, and the scope of international action.

Within the UN Security Council, where the peacekeeping mandate is defined, there are manifest misgivings about the human rights and protection undertaking.

Members tend to have different understandings and expectations about individual peacekeeping operations and consensus on the scope of mandates is rare. While, in principle, each mission is supposed to be established after careful analysis and deliberations, that is atypical. Instead, the process is often a “cut and paste” job, with some political “give and take” and minimal deliberation on how the mandate is to be executed. It is left up to the secretariat at implementation to confront the difficult challenge of allocating scarce resources to competing tasks. This results in obfuscation and fruitless debate.

The trend toward partnership and subsidiarity is another dimension of the political challenge. The African Union and its RECs have increasingly assumed greater roles on peace and security matters in the region, including in peacekeeping. This is justified as a necessary complement to the UN’s primary role and arguably a more effective approach to conflict resolution because of the proximity of regional organizations to the issues. But it belies a conceptual gap because regional organizations do not necessarily share the same normative perspectives. There is still a lot of reticence about human rights in the AU. Traditional sovereignty still predominates and poses a major obstacle to the realization of consensus on mass atrocities and other challenges emanating from human rights violations. This discordance between global and regional perspectives is a significant obstacle to the human rights agenda.

Political expediency also often overrides human rights niceties. In 2010 the UN shelved a comprehensive report about human rights violations in the DRC because of protests from some of the countries implicated in the report. A year earlier, a Security Council-appointed team opted not to discuss serious concerns about the integration of armed groups into the national army (FARDC), contrary to the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, allegedly because it would upset the host government. On several occasions in South Sudan, sanctions for human rights violations were not pursued because of concern that they might jeopardize efforts to end the conflict.

Despite the huge scale of human rights violations in parts of Africa, the high level of political commitment which characterized past international engagements on human rights concerns in conflict elsewhere, such as Kosovo beginning in 1999, has not been evident. To put it bluntly, Africa tends to attract less attention. This could be a legacy of “conflict fatigue” over Africa or/and the absence of strong political interests on

the continent among the key powers. It is argued by some that the international community lacks a genuine commitment to resolve conflicts in Africa; peacekeeping thus serves as a kind of palliative. The situation is not helped by an insidious paradox: those who fund peacekeeping, largely Western nations, define the mandate, which typically centers on damage limitation rather than substantive attempts to resolve the conflict; the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), which are largely from Africa and Asia, have little say in how the mandate is shaped.<sup>19</sup>

As the HIPPO report has pointed out, peacekeeping operations express “different interests and concerns”—of the Security Council, regional neighbors, and TCCs. It is therefore important to have “a shared understanding of the situation, a common political goal and clarity on the level of resolve and resources required to help deliver and sustain a political solution.”<sup>20</sup> The lack of political commitment and coherent support is serious and foreshadows most of the other challenges related to the mandate to protect civilians, including the lack of clarity on its scope, the diffusion of tasks and responsibilities, the limited resources and the lack of political support during critical phases of implementation.

### *Conceptual Ambiguity*

Closely linked to the lack of political consensus is the fact that despite the overwhelming sentiment that the UN should do something about the plight of civilians in conflict, the key concepts—protection of civilians, human rights promotion and protection, humanitarianism and responsibility to protect—are used in different and sometimes contradictory contexts. These ambiguities lead to confusion, undermine political support, and negatively impact operationalization and implementation.<sup>21</sup> For example, the UN Security Council has used the concept of “protection of civilians” in different senses, alluding to “physical protection” but also appearing to allow for other broader perspectives including human rights. In Resolution 2448, renewing MINUSCA’s mandate, for example, the Security Council authorized it to “protect, without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the CAR Authorities and the basic principles of peacekeeping, the civilian population under threat of physical violence.”<sup>22</sup> This is essentially the same formulation that the Council has used since 1999 when it first mandated the protection of civilians in UNAMSIL, with minor but important modifications: deleting the phrase “imminent threat of violence” in earlier resolutions in favor of simply “threat of

violence” apparently because the term “imminent” caused confusion and equivocation.

The formulation in the Security Council resolutions, particularly the use of terms such as “all necessary means,” “civilians under threat,” and “within area of operation or presence,” and the context of the debate around the first mandate have been interpreted to suggest that the Security Council means “physical protection” when it mandates the protection of civilians.<sup>23</sup> But the Security Council does not explicitly say that. Moreover, the language in other parts of the resolutions alludes to broader notions beyond physical protection. The standard caveats used in the resolutions—“consistent with principles of peacekeeping,” “within their capabilities and areas of deployment”—seem to limit the scope of the mandate and create further confusion and uncertainty, seemingly permitting a peacekeeping mission to not act if it determines that it lacks the “capability.” This may seem reasonable on the surface, but it creates the potential for equivocation, and no assurances that the mission will be held accountable for not acting.

In a bid to offer guidance to peace missions, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has developed a policy aimed at clarifying and reconciling the concept.<sup>24</sup> Supposedly, the policy draws from the Security Council’s definition of “protection,”<sup>25</sup> from which it elaborates three tiers of activities that encompass the protection of civilians. Tier I includes public information campaigns to promote respect for human rights; dialogue with a perpetrator or potential perpetrator to deter violations; mediation and the resolution of conflicts among the parties to the conflict; persuading governments and other relevant actors to intervene to protect civilians; and other related activities which are intended to prevent human rights violations. Tier II relates to physical protection and involves the show of or use of force by the police and military components to prevent, deter, preempt, or respond to situations in which civilians are under threat of physical violence. Tier III are activities that are intended to create an environment that protects civilians, such as supporting elections and political processes; conflict mediation and resolution; security sector reform; strengthening the rule of law; the promotion and protection of human rights; the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants; and supporting the return and reintegration of IDPs and refugees. These are medium- to long-term programmatic activities of the entire UN system and partners in the country, including the peacekeeping mission.

Complicating matters is the fact that human rights activists and groups, which play critical roles in the protection of civilians, often have different perspectives. The humanitarian community envisages the protection of civilians to include “all efforts aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual and of the obligations of the authorities/arms bearers in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law.”<sup>26</sup> From a human rights perspective, the scope of protection is much broader, covering all the rights and freedoms recognized in international and regional instruments and ensuing obligations, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international criminal law, and international refugee law, and applies in times of peace and war to all individuals, not just civilians.<sup>27</sup> The DPKO policy seems to embrace both the humanitarian and human rights perspectives.

It is left up to peacekeeping missions to develop their strategy for the protection of civilians, indicating priority areas of focus. This may seem pragmatic but it is not prudent. Mission strategies tend to be a laundry list: clearly articulated, concrete goals and priorities are absent. The differing and sometimes competing perspectives on the key concepts has made it challenging to articulate “protection of civilians” in implementable terms.<sup>28</sup> There is no consensus in the Security Council on when it should be triggered and what the circumstances warrant. The various components in UN peacekeeping missions can become embroiled in disagreements over concepts, which impede the development of a decisive, unified approach. Humanitarian partners, for instance, eschew the carrying of or use of arms for physical protection. This can create tension with, as well as uncertainty and indecision for, the military component (and TCCs). The consequent inaction is then exploited by the host country and those not fully supportive of human rights and the protection of civilians.

## COMPATIBILITY WITH THE ORIGINAL IDEA OF PEACEKEEPING

Although it is generally conceded that UN peacekeeping has evolved from its traditional underpinnings, its original architecture remains in place. The idea behind UN peacekeeping was to position “neutral” UN troops between belligerents who had agreed to stop fighting in order to limit the risk of resumption in the fighting while a peace process was progressing.<sup>29</sup> It was considered a limited instrument, premised on a peace agreement

and the commitment of the parties, and the UN as a peace broker and a neutral party with no stake in the conflict. The core UN peacekeeping principles—impartiality, consent, and the restriction on the use of force—derive from this general context and premises.<sup>30</sup>

Much of the original conception no longer holds. And yet, it continues to dominate the architecture of peacekeeping. As African experiences demonstrate, UN peacekeeping is no longer just deployed where fighting has ended; in fact, it is usually deployed where active hostility is still on-going, often involving multiple actors. Furthermore, the typical peacekeeping mandate today is also expansive, comprising mediation, extending and supporting state authority, and protecting civilians, sometimes against their own governments.

### *Finding the Right Balance Among the Tools*

An important policy issue that has not received much attention concerns the order of priorities among the various peacebuilding tools. The relationship between the relative investments in physical protection and diplomatic engagement is a case in point. In practice, military and police components receive far greater resources and attention than the political aspects. Yet it is the politics on which so much else, including the physical, turns.<sup>31</sup>

Physical protection, in the sense outlined in Tier II of the DPKO Policy, involving “...those activities by police and military components involving the show or use of force to prevent, deter, pre-empt and respond to situations in which civilians are under threat of physical violence”<sup>32</sup> is important and necessary as a protection tool. It is this idea which dominates the Security Council’s thinking when it mandates the protection of civilians. Peacekeeping missions need a force not only to protect the mission’s assets and personnel but also, as recommended in the Brahimi report, “to protect civilians in imminent risk of violence.” Hence, the trend toward enforcement mandates and the robust initiatives such as the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) within the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which was mandated to carry out “targeted offensive operations” to “neutralize armed groups”<sup>33</sup> and the Regional Protection Force in UNMISS.

Heads of missions and TCCs regularly complain that they lack the resources to properly equip the military and police for the mandated tasks,

especially for its physical protection responsibility. As Hilde Johnson has pointed out, the glaring mismatch between the UNMISS' mandate and its resources made it “close to impossible” for the mission to deliver on its mandate to provide physical protection to civilians under threat.<sup>34</sup> Objective assessments confirm that almost all are woefully equipped for the challenge that they confront. On the other hand, the military and police components consume the bulk of the resources of the mission. They are expensive. The civilian components of peacekeeping missions receive very little in relative terms, and most of their resources are allocated to staff salaries and benefits. Very little, if any, is devoted to programs.

The argument is not that the allocation for the military and police should be reduced. On the contrary, there is a very good case to be made that they ought to be properly equipped and staffed to meet the requirements of the mandated tasks. But in the current scenario, where the military are inadequately equipped and there is under-investment in the diplomatic and political spheres, success is all but impossible. Along with strengthening the military component, therefore, it will be important to invest commensurately in the diplomatic and political dimensions, and to strengthen more explicit synergy among the three. Clarity is also needed on the relevance of the peacekeeping principles, especially consent and the use of force.

### *Enforcing the Primary Responsibility of the Host State*

Under international law, the state bears the primary responsibility to protect human rights. This is concretized in the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine: the idea that sovereignty entails the responsibility to protect, which came out of the same movement and sentiment that spurred the protection of civilians mandate in UN peacekeeping. The state’s responsibility entails the duty to ensure that its institutions and citizens, and those under its control, do not violate human rights.

All Security Council resolutions mandate peacekeeping operations to protect civilians “without prejudice to the responsibility of the state.” In practice, the state is best placed to protect human rights. As HIPPO rightly points out, however, peacekeeping, even in ideal circumstances, is no substitute for an effective state.<sup>35</sup> A necessary part of a strategy for the protection of civilians should be to ensure the state fulfills its primary responsibility.

In most peacekeeping situations, the state is either unable to provide protection or often complicit in, if not responsible for, perpetrating human rights violations and undermining the rule of law. In South Sudan, for example, the state is implicated in violent attacks against civilians; in CAR, some of the armed groups that are accused of human rights violations are supported by the state. In these circumstances, the responsibility of the international community is to remind the state of its responsibility and to support the state as necessary to enable it to fulfill its responsibility; failing that, the international community must intervene through diplomatic *demarches* or even armed intervention.

UN peacekeeping missions have not been very effective in holding the state to its primary responsibility—using any of these tools—and do not consistently use their political leverage. The failure to act has had the impact of emboldening governments and other perpetrators, perpetuating impunity and possibly worsening the human rights situation. The most intransigent countries, such as the DRC and South Sudan, ignore Security Council resolutions and ultimatums because they are confident that there will be no repercussions. In turn, this tends to disempower and undermine the peacekeeping mission's human rights efforts. Cognizant that they are unlikely to get strong support from the Security Council and from the UN, mission leadership treads very carefully around human rights issues.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Reinvigorate UN peacekeeping focus on the protection of civilians and human rights.* Without this, its core mission of ending conflict and restoring peace and stability is unlikely to succeed. Despite some notable accomplishments, overall the UN's record on the protection of civilians and human rights is poor. Mandates have almost invariably promised more than they have delivered. There are far too many reports of civilians being attacked, sometimes in the presence of UN peacekeepers, and cases where the system has not responded adequately or failed to respond in the face of threats to civilians. Reviews of UN peacekeeping performance identify formidable challenges: weak and unreliable political support; conceptual and normative ambiguities; differing interpretations by key actors on the scope of the mandate; structural and systemic contradictions, and inadequate resources and capabilities.

What is clear from this record is that the current state of affairs is no longer tenable. UN peacekeeping must move beyond rhetoric and improve its performance. A genuine commitment to implement the recommendations of HIPPO, which member states seem to support, would be an important first step.

2. *Strengthen political consensus around human rights and the protection of civilians.* The assumption that the fundamentals of peacekeeping and protection of civilians are sound is false. Equivocation, politicization, and a weak consensus persist around critical issues. It is therefore important to have an honest debate to seek fresh consensus on the purpose, relevance, and scope of the protection of civilians mandate and its place in peacekeeping, including a realistic assessment of what peacekeeping can—and cannot—deliver.<sup>36</sup> That will not be easy in the context of the current erosion of the international global order, but the issue must be addressed more candidly for meaningful change to take place in a process involving all key actors—General Assembly member states, regional groups and neighbors, TCCs, etc.—in order to close the gap between the Security Council where mandates are defined and the other actors who bear some of the responsibility for implementation.
3. *Address the apparent incompatibility between traditional peacekeeping and deference to national sovereignty.* The apparent incompatibility between the traditional principles of peacekeeping, particularly with respect to the requirement for consent and the underlying deference to sovereignty, and what is required to protect human rights needs to be resolved. The obstinacy of the host state, in delaying requests for patrols, restricting the movement of peacekeepers and visits to sites of human rights violations, perpetually frustrate efforts to protect civilians and are indefensible. Waiting for consent in such circumstances undermines the protection of civilians. The privilege of sovereignty does not seem warranted in such cases. On the contrary, a more concerted effort is needed to uphold and enforce the primary responsibility of the host state to defend and protect human rights. Peacekeeping can only do so much and will not succeed without this. The Security Council needs to demonstrate that it has the resolve to follow through. Moreover, that it will take action if its resolutions are not respected or cooperation is absent. Strongly worded resolutions and threats are not enough and

could even be damaging to international order and the credibility of the Security Council if they can be ignored with impunity.

4. *Close the gap between mission mandates and resources required to achieve the missions.* As others have recommended, the Security Council needs to more seriously consider the operational implications of mandates and the resources and other capabilities required to follow through and implement the mandate; doing more with less is a failing strategy. UN missions should be properly staffed and equipped and a more explicit link between the military, political and diplomatic aspects of the mandate should be cultivated. The UNSC should also continue to be involved at all stages of the mandate's implementation and, in particular, to continue to lend political support, including to heads of missions, who must be accountable. The Security Council should approach subsidiarity with caution, remain closely engaged and insist on adherence to agreed international norms—to deter regional organizations and neighbors from acting as spoilers, as they sometimes do.

## NOTES

1. United Nations, *Uniting our Strengths for Peace, Politics, Partnerships and People, Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, A/70/95-S/2015/446 (June 17, 2015), 9 (HIPPO).
2. Ibid., para 80 (protection of civilians in armed conflict is a core principle of international humanitarian law and a moral responsibility for the United Nations).
3. There have been more than 50 peace operations in Africa in the twenty-first century as Williams points out, but not all of them are UN-led. See Paul D. Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Polity, 2016), 279–281.
4. See, e.g., the most recent statement by the President of the Security Council, May 14, 2018, S/PRST/2018/10, reiterating that peacekeeping complements the UN's peace and security strategy and affirming the Security Council's commitment to the protection of civilians.
5. United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35: The Fall of Srebrenica*, A/54/549 (November 15, 1999), para 49; and United Nations, *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda*, S/1999/1257 (December 16, 1999), paras. 50–52.
6. United Nations, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (the Brahimi Report)*, A/55/305 (2000) and S/2000/809.

7. United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict* (1999).
8. Piers Robinson, *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).
9. Haidi Wilmont, Ralph Mamiya, Scott Sheeron, and Marc Weller (eds.), *Protection of Civilians*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2016). Protection of civilians existed since the beginning of the UN although it was not explicitly mandated.
10. The only UN peacekeeping operation deployed since 1999 without a protection of civilians mandate was the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS). See SC Res. 2043 (April 14, 2012), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7b65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7d/Syria%20SRES%202043.pdf>.
11. For an overview of the protection of civilians mandate in UN Peacekeeping, see generally Victoria Holt and Glyn Taylor with Max Kelly, “Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations, Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges,” Independent Study Jointly commissioned by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2009), Chapter 2, 33–88, <https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Protecting%20Civilians%20in%20the%20Context%20of%20UN%20Peacekeeping%20Operations.pdf>; For a list of current peacekeeping operations, see <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/where-we-operate> and for a timeline of Peacekeeping Operations, see <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/past-peacekeeping-operations>.
12. HIPPO.
13. Harvard Hegre, Lisa Hultman, and Havard Mokleiv Nygard, “Peacekeeping Works: An Assessment of the Effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping Operations,” *Conflict Trends* 1 (2015), <https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=96&type=publicationfile>.
14. Lisa Hultman, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon, “United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War,” *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 4 (2013): 875–891; and Alexandra Novosseloff, “Can We Make Peacekeeping Great Again?” *Global Peace Operations Review* (May 9, 2017). “UN peace operations are helping to protect thousands of civilians on a daily basis through monitoring and advocacy of human rights, supporting the development of the rule of law, and political engagement with the conflict parties, as well as through physical presence, deterrence and protective action.”
15. E.g., Séverine Autesserre, “Crisis of Peacekeeping: Why the UN Can’t End Wars,” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2019).
16. See Paul D. Williams, Chapter 2 on “Learning Lessons from Peace Operations in Africa” in this book.

17. Both the Brahimi (UN doc. A/55/305-S/2000/809, August 21, 2000) and the HIPPO reports (UN doc. A/70/95-S/2015/446, June 17, 2015) acknowledged 15 years later the serious impact of overcrowded mandates and urged realistic prioritization.
18. Hilde Johnson, “Capacity to Protect Civilians: Rhetoric or Reality?” International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations, Policy Brief 2015:4. Introduction: Protection of Civilians Norms and Frameworks
19. Autesserre, “Crisis of Peacekeeping.”
20. HIPPO, para 58.
21. Bertrand Ramcharan (ed.), *Human Rights Protection in the Field* (London: Routledge, 2006), 102. The lack of a “common, system-wide ... understanding of the concept of ‘protection’ has given rise to problematic inconsistencies in both usage and practice.”
22. Similar language was used in the initial resolution which established the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) (Res. 2149) which mandated it to “protect, without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the Central African Republic authorities, the civilian population from threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and areas of deployment, including through active patrolling.”
23. Wilmont, Mamiya, Sheeron, and Weller, *Protection of Civilians*, 97. The language and the discussion surrounding the first adoption of the protection of civilians mandate indicate that the Security Council conceived the protection of civilians narrowly in terms of physical protection from the threat of imminent violence.
24. United Nations, *Policy on Protection of Civilians*, S/RES/2382 (2017). An update of the first version developed in 2010 after recommendation for UN system wide guidelines in OCHA/DPKO study.
25. “all necessary means, up to and including the use of deadly force, aimed at preventing or responding to threats of physical violence against civilians, within capabilities and areas of operations, and without prejudice to the responsibility of the host government.”
26. Inter-Agency Standing Committee, “Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action” (2016), <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/protection-priority-global-protection-cluster/documents/iasc-policy-protection-humanitarian-action>.
27. UN Human Rights Council, *Protection of the Human Rights of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, Res. 9/9, 2008; Statement of Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, at the UN Security Council Debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (June 25, 2012) <https://newsarchive.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=12288>; and OHCHR staff, “Protection in the

- Field: Human Rights Perspectives,” in *Human Rights Protection in the Field*, Betrand Ramcharan (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2006), 119, 121.
28. Ramcharan, *Human Rights Protection in the Field*.
  29. Wilmont, Mamiya, Sheeron, and Weller, *Protection of Civilians*. Missions such as UNTSO (Jerusalem); UNMOGP (Kashmir); UNFCIYP (Cyprus); UNDOF (Golan Heights); UNIFIL (South Lebanon); MINURSO (Western Sahara); and UNISFA (Abyei) represent this notion of peace-keeping.
  30. United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*, Principles of UN Peacekeeping (2008), [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping/en/capstone\\_eng.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping/en/capstone_eng.pdf).
  31. HIPPO, para 107. Lasting peace is not achieved or sustained by military and technical engagements, but through political solutions—“political solutions, not military force, are the true force multipliers’ for peace-keepers.”
  32. See <http://civilianprotection.rw/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015-07-Policy-on-PoC-in-Peacekeeping-Operations.pdf>.
  33. United Nations, *The Situation in Democratic Republic of the Congo*, UNSCR 2098 (March 28, 2013), para 12b.
  34. Johnson, “Capacity to Protect Civilians.”
  35. HIPPO, para 27.
  36. HIPPO, para 41, urges consensus on the future direction and needs of UN peace operations to be restored, and a genuine collaboration and commitment by the General Assembly and Security Council to go “beyond the diplomatic trench lines of the last decade and to find solutions on how best to deal with today’s threats and how to strengthen United Nations peace operations for tomorrow. This will require a spirit of genuine collaboration and inclusion so as to establish a common purpose and resolve.”

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PART II

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## Strategies and Tools



## CHAPTER 7

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# Sustaining the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda: The Role of UN Peacekeeping in Africa

*Lisa Sharland*

## INTRODUCTION

In May 2000, the Government of Namibia hosted a workshop focused on mainstreaming a gender perspective into the work of multidimensional peace support operations. The workshop set out to examine practical ways that the United Nations (UN) and member states could strengthen the principles of gender equality, through the vehicle of peace operations, as a means to ensure a “situation of political stability in which women and men play an equal part in the political, economic, and social development of their country.”<sup>1</sup> It was a timely discussion in Namibia, as the workshop marked ten years since the country had hosted a UN peace-keeping mission.<sup>2</sup> One outcome from that workshop was the Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender

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Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations.<sup>3</sup> That outcome document contributed to the eventual adoption of the UN Security Council's first resolution (UNSCR1325) on women, peace, and security (WPS) in October 2000.<sup>4</sup> As such, the council recognized that women's equality and security was linked to the maintenance of international peace and security. UN peace operations had an important role to take forward the agenda in areas where they were deployed.

More UN peacekeeping missions have deployed to Africa than any other continent. As of October 2019, seven UN peacekeeping missions were deployed on the African continent, with more than 80,000 blue helmets serving across large multidimensional missions in contexts such as Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Western Sahara. Two long-term missions, in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, recently transitioned and exited the country after nearly fifteen years.

Although there has been progress with women's political representation in Africa, women remain disadvantaged in many parts of the continent due to patriarchal attitudes and cultural norms. Women have disproportionately borne the consequences of conflicts across the continent. They have been targeted through sexual violence as a tactic of war, kidnapped and instrumentalized by terrorist groups, and been limited by attitudes that marginalize their voices in conflict resolution. This is despite the fact that women's participation and engagement in conflict resolution efforts are likely to contribute to a more sustainable peace.

UN peacekeeping has provided an important vehicle for progressing the WPS agenda, with mandates focused on strengthening women's participation in peace processes, ensuring the protection of women and girls, and integrating gender considerations into the approach of missions aimed at building sustainable peace.<sup>5</sup> These missions have subsequently influenced efforts in parts of the continent to improve women's equality and strengthen their participation in the security sector, government, and political life. Research has shown that peacebuilding is less likely to succeed without the participation and consideration of women, and that gender inequality can be an indicator of conflict.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, the role of UN peace operations in advancing WPS is worthy of further examination when it comes to examining lessons for peacebuilding efforts in Africa.

This chapter explores the opportunities and challenges that emerge from the efforts of UN peacekeeping missions advancing WPS in Africa.

The first section examines how UN peacekeeping missions can advance WPS and whether these efforts within Africa have aligned with the efforts of continental, regional, and national approaches in Africa to build peace through women's participation and the integration of gender perspectives. The second section draws on the case studies of Liberia and South Sudan, as past and present hosts of UN peacekeeping missions, to highlight some of the different opportunities and challenges that are presented through the deployment of UN peacekeeping missions when it comes to furthering WPS. And the third section identifies some opportunities, limits, and constraints of UN peacekeeping as a tool to advance WPS, particularly when assessed against many of the initiatives already underway on the continent and the different types of reforms required at the national and subnational level to support implementation.

## CATALYZING WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY THROUGH UN PEACE OPERATIONS IN AFRICA

The women, peace, and security agenda has been codified through the adoption of ten resolutions by the UN Security Council over the last two decades.<sup>7</sup> Yet efforts to link women's participation and engagement in conflict prevention efforts, as well as their protection, had been underway across the globe for decades before it came to the fore of the Security Council. Women-led civil society organizations had been championing a feminist peace agenda and their right to have a voice in such discussions long before the adoption of Resolution 1325. Indeed, the resolution had some origins in the work of African feminists and regional institutions on the continent in the years prior. As Toni Haastrup notes, the current Special Envoy on WPS for the African Union, Bineta Diop, spearheaded this work as the founder of *Femmes Africa Solidarite*. The WPS agenda is consequently considered by some to have been midwifed by Africa, with the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration in May 2000, which was championed by Namibia and laid the foundations for the comprehensive globalization of the agenda.<sup>8</sup>

Early lessons on the value and importance of women's participation and the consideration of gender perspectives in efforts to address conflict had emerged from some of the peacekeeping missions deployed in the decades prior to the adoption of Resolution 1325. But as the Windhoek Declaration noted, women had been "denied their full role in these efforts" and the gender aspects had "not been adequately addressed."<sup>9</sup>

The Declaration identified a number of reforms and improvements related to UN peacekeeping that were included in Resolution 1325, such as urging an expanded role and contribution for women through their participation in peacekeeping missions (including their appointment into senior leadership positions), and integrating gender expertise into peacekeeping missions through training and a gender component.

With more than a dozen UN peace operations deployed to the African continent since the adoption of Resolution 1325, peacekeeping has consequently served as a modest vehicle for operationalizing some aspects of the agenda through WPS in Africa.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, African troop and police contributions to UN peacekeeping missions have offered an important vehicle for operationalizing aspects of the agenda through fostering women's participation and delivering training on integrating gender considerations. Yet those efforts have yielded mixed results, reflecting some of the broader challenges. There have also been limits with regard to how effectively peacekeeping missions have worked to build on existing national and local processes so that they are likely to be sustainable beyond the deployment of the peacekeeping mission.

### *Evolution of Women, Peace, and Security in Peacekeeping*

Efforts to integrate different aspects of the WPS agenda into the mandates of UN peacekeeping missions have progressed significantly over the last two decades. When the Security Council authorized the deployment of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 1999, it simply included a reference to the importance of training on "child and gender-related provisions." As the adoption of a suite of resolutions on WPS has expanded, so has the initiative of the Security Council to include more detailed and specific provisions in its mandates, for instance to:

- i. Address a wider range of different provisions to respond to women's protection needs, including from sexual and gender-based violence through mechanisms such as women's protection advisors;
- ii. encourage host authorities to facilitate women's participation in electoral and political processes;
- iii. consider women's needs in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes;

- iv. increase women's participation in the security sector (including through improved representation of women in peacekeeping missions); and
- v. more comprehensively integrate gender into all aspects of the work of peacekeeping missions (including through the deployment of gender advisers).

The significant number of UN peacekeeping missions deployed across the African continent over the last two decades has resulted in their use as a driver for WPS in some country-specific contexts. For instance, missions have included mandates to:

- i. Protect women from physical violence and the widespread use of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war (e.g., MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and UNMISS in South Sudan);
- ii. elevate the voices of women and civil society actors who may have been largely absent from government and the security sector (e.g., UNMIL in Liberia and UNOCI in Côte d'Ivoire); and
- iii. ensure that women have a meaningful voice in peace forums and negotiations (e.g., MINUSCA in the Central African Republic).

In many instances, these efforts have been complemented by the work of regional and sub-regional organizations on the continent, whether it be through engagement in peace processes, joint United Nations-African Union (AU) visits by envoys, or the work of AU peace operations, which have mirrored many of the approaches of UN peacekeeping missions. For instance, in AMISOM “gender” is one of the six units of the civilian component. While these efforts have been directed at advancing women’s participation and gender equality, they also contribute to furthering the sustainability and likelihood of peace long after a peacekeeping mission has transitioned and departed the country.<sup>11</sup>

The “Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations,” agreed to by more than 150 member states and regional organizations, including 41 African Union members and the African Union Commission, captures many of these developments on WPS and commits to ongoing reforms. It does so in four areas:

- i. Ensuring the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in all stages of the peace processes;
- ii. systematically integrating a gender perspective into all stages of analysis, planning, implementation and reporting;
- iii. increasing the number of civilian and uniformed women in peace-keeping at all levels and in key positions; and
- iv. tailored, context-specific peacekeeping approaches to protecting civilians, in relevant peacekeeping operations, emphasizing the protection of women and children in those contexts.<sup>12</sup>

If implemented effectively, through prioritization, member state commitment, and sufficient resourcing, these measures will ensure that UN peacekeeping missions advance women's role in peace and security in their countries of deployment. Efforts to work closely with the UN Country Team (UNCT) when it comes to gender may also be critical in supporting national efforts. But there are still limits as to how far such initiatives may influence domestic reforms within their countries of deployment, as ultimately it is up to the host authorities to ensure that these reforms are being integrated through governance, justice, and the work of the security sector. For those efforts to be sustainable, peace operations must promote local, national, and regional ownership of the WPS agenda.

#### *Intersection with Continental, Regional, and Domestic Approaches*

The African Union has taken a leading role in implementing the WPS agenda in parallel with the developments globally through the UN Security Council. The formation of the African Union, building on the Organization of African Unity (OAU), contemporaneously with the adoption of Resolution 1325, meant that many of the African Union's foundational documents and institutions incorporated aspects of the WPS agenda into their formation.<sup>13</sup> For instance, gender equality and female participation are included in the African Union's founding documents including the African Union Constitutive Act (2002). As Haastrup notes, Africans have been engaged in WPS from the beginning, therefore "it is thus unsurprising that the African Union has also taken up the discourse that aims to prioritize gender perspectives in the institutionalization and practice of peace and security on the continent."<sup>14</sup>

In the last twenty years, the African Union has institutionalized WPS and ensured it is embedded across a range of continental, regional, and national policy instruments.<sup>15</sup> In 2014, the Chair of the AU Commission appointed a Special Envoy on Women, Peace, and Security, with a mandate “to promote and echo the voices of women in conflict prevention, management and resolution, as well as advocate for the protection of their rights, including putting an end to impunity on sexual and gender-based violence.”<sup>16</sup> The African Union has developed a Gender Policy (2009) and a strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (2017–2027). In 2017, the AU launched the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (Femwise). The Peace and Security Commission continues to hold open sessions on women, peace, and security.

The continent has, at times, been lauded for the levels of women’s political representation as well. For instance, Rwanda continues to have over 60 percent representation of women in parliament, a figure of envy for many in Europe and the West. Countries such as Kenya have constitutional quotas for women’s representation (one third) in appointed and elected bodies. There have also been efforts to implement quotas as part of peace agreements. For example, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan requires 35 percent women’s representation in governance and transition structures in South Sudan. But results have been mixed, with many targets continuing to fall short and women being negatively impacted in their efforts to engage in political life.

Many countries have also demonstrated political commitment to WPS through the development of National Action Plans (NAPs). As of 2019, 23 African member states have adopted NAPs on WPS.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, at the regional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Mano River Union, and the Great Lakes Region have all adopted regional action plans. Yet as the African Union Commission has noted, implementation often remains poor, with NAPs being viewed as an end for the achievement on WPS, rather than a means to transform the lives of women.<sup>18</sup> Several of the countries that have developed NAPs have hosted UN peacekeeping missions, with some working with the UN peacekeeping mission to develop their NAP (e.g., Liberia). As Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley argue, there is some evidence that peacekeeping missions can encourage the creation of NAPS that focus on “domestic

gender reforms.”<sup>19</sup> But like the flaws identified in other NAPS, their effectiveness and sustainability require political will, financial support, and accountability mechanisms.<sup>20</sup> This has often been in short supply. Nonetheless, there are risks that UN peacekeeping missions might overlook the already existing mechanisms on the continent for addressing women’s participation, their engagement in conflict prevention, and their protection.

## FURTHERING WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY THROUGH UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS: CASE STUDIES

Each UN peacekeeping mission deployed to the African continent offers different lessons when it comes to examining efforts to progress WPS. This section examines two different mission contexts—UNMIL in Liberia and UNMISS in South Sudan—to identify some of the different opportunities and challenges for advancing gender equality and furthering the participation of women in politics and the security sector. Each case study represents a mission at different stages (one transitioned, one still deployed), different conflict situations (one emerging from civil war, one a newly independent nation now grappling with the consequences of civil war), and different geographic locations.

### *Liberia: Lessons from Integrating Gender and Transitions*

UNMIL completed its deployment in March 2018, after close to 15 years on the ground. UNMIL had deployed in October 2003, following the signing of the August 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Liberia had been ravaged by civil war throughout the 1990s. What makes UNMIL such an interesting case study, is that it was one of the first missions to incorporate significant provisions from Resolution 1325, following its adoption a few years earlier. As a result, the mandate for UNMIL picks up on many of the themes that were included in that resolution. Consequently, UNMIL has been viewed as one of the more successful missions when it comes to implementing key provisions of the WPS agenda.<sup>21</sup> Throughout the fifteen years that the mission was deployed, it supported Liberia’s efforts to advance WPS domestically in several ways. This section will examine the mission’s role in facilitating women’s participation in government and politics, advocating and modeling a role for women in the security sector, and facilitating processes

to develop a national and domestic approach through the development of Liberia's first National Action Plan on WPS.

Women bore a significant brunt of the conflict throughout the 14-year civil war in Liberia. The economic decline had limited their rights, there was widespread victimization making women more susceptible to sexual and gender-based violence, and women had lost critical access to different types of infrastructure across society, disempowering them.<sup>22</sup> The first mandate authorizing the deployment of UNMIL in October 2003 consequently included a heavy focus on women's protection from violence. Resolution 1509 deplored "all violations of human rights, particularly atrocities against civilian populations, including widespread sexual violence against women and children," and referred to the importance of considering the "special needs of child combatants and women" in terms of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation programs, as well as protecting and promoting human rights. Perhaps most importantly, it reaffirmed "the importance of a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations and post-conflict peace-building in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000), recalled the need to address violence against women and girls as a tool of warfare, and encouraged UNMIL as well as the Liberian parties to actively address these issues."<sup>23</sup> This mandate enabled the establishment of a gender adviser function within the mission, which facilitated ongoing initiatives across the mission.

Despite the disproportionate impact that the civil war in Liberia had on woman, this had not stopped their efforts to ensure their voices were heard when it came to the political processes in the country. Prior to the deployment of UNMIL in 2003, women had engaged through initiatives such as the Liberian Women Initiative, the Mano River Women Peace-building Network, and Women in Peacebuilding Network, to develop constituencies of support and insert themselves into the peace negotiations.<sup>24</sup> This ultimately meant that the will of women was captured in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which also set quotas for representatives in the Transitional Legislative Assembly. Similarly, the Ministry of Gender and Development was established in 2001, serving "as the primary vehicle on all matters affecting the protection, promotion, participation and advancement of women in Liberia."<sup>25</sup>

Notably, much of the groundwork on women's participation and gender mainstreaming had been laid before the deployment of a UNMIL.<sup>26</sup> Many of the reforms that contributed to the environment that fostered women's participation and contributed to the election of

the continent’s first female President in 2005, for instance, is therefore attributable to the work of women’s civil society organizations in Liberia, although this was amplified by the work of UNMIL in investing in gender training and providing support to the Ministry of Gender.<sup>27</sup> Notably, as the best practices study by the UN indicated in 2009, the key to success up until that point had been a “multi-stakeholder” process, which engaged with the government, civil society organizations, and community-based organizations, “harnessing the existing political will for gender issues in the country.”<sup>28</sup> The emergence of key women leaders was also fundamental to these efforts.

Also notable was the focus on women’s participation in the security sector in UNMIL’s mission mandate. UNMIL is often lauded for being one of the first missions to facilitate the deployment of an all-female Formed Police Unit (FPU) from India, with this being identified as an important enabling factor in encouraging and modeling women’s participation in the security sector.<sup>29</sup> However there are mixed views on how effective the deployment was in encouraging greater participation of women in the security sector and engaging with local women, given that restrictions on their mobility and interactions may have limited them reaching their potential.<sup>30</sup> As Karim argues, while the deployed FPUs may have contributed to important overall goals within the peacekeeping mission (such as increased ratios of female peacekeepers and their engagement in protection efforts), those achievements still largely focused on largely “feminized work,” meaning female peacekeepers continue to face barriers to their engagement.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, if these deployments of female peacekeepers are to serve as role models, then it is a narrow scope for the women seeking to serve in the Liberian security sector.

Efforts to increase women’s participation in the national police in Liberia extended beyond simply mirroring the representation of female peacekeepers in missions. UNMIL worked closely with the Liberian National Police (LNP) to deliver on targets for women’s participation, and develop educational support programs to ensure women met the basic standard for qualification and recruitment.<sup>32</sup> Numbers consequently increased, although efforts to generate more sustainable reforms remain hampered by many of the challenges facing women in defense and police sectors globally, including family pressures, pregnancy, and health issues. Nonetheless, UNMIL’s engagement expedited efforts to increase the participation of women in the security sector, including through working

with donors and other partners to implement security sector reform programs.

In support of more comprehensive engagement on WPS, UNMIL also engaged in supporting the development of Liberia's first National Action Plan on WPS. In fact, the plan, adopted in 2009, recognized the support not only of UNMIL, but other UN agencies and donor countries in supporting its development. While there has been no second national version to follow after the NAPs initial period of 2009-2013, Liberia now has in place 11 localized plans on WPS.<sup>33</sup> Although NAPs are not the only indicator of government commitment to WPS (and indeed, can often serve as a smokescreen to conceal other failings), the presence of a NAP is often viewed as a starting point.

There is no doubt that UNMIL and the engagement of stakeholders brought resources to bear that supported Liberia's engagement on WPS over the last two decades, demonstrating that UN peacekeeping missions, in particular, can contribute to the advancement of WPS in countries affected by conflict. For Liberia, the challenge will be ensuring that those gains are sustained going forward.

### *South Sudan: Navigating Politics and Protection Concerns*

Women were actively engaged in the independence movement for South Sudan. However, since then, they have continued to struggle to have a more formal role in peace negotiations as the country has struggled to resolve decades of internal divides, particularly since the outbreak of civil war in the country in December 2013.

UNMISS was established in July 2011, following the country's independence. Unfortunately, after decades of conflict with the north, South Sudan fell into civil war in December 2013, and women have disproportionately suffered as a consequence, through mass displacement and unprecedented levels of sexual violence, with the latter often being used to reward fighters for their engagement in the conflict.<sup>34</sup> With these developments, UNMISS' WPS mandate shifted from an initial focus on women's participation and engagement in political processes, to one that is focused on women's protection.<sup>35</sup> With that change, the mission also disengaged in its capacity-building efforts with the host government as it had largely become complicit in human rights abuses and atrocities, including against women. Needless to say, the operating environment for UNMISS when it comes to advancing WPS has been challenging.

Efforts to progress women's engagement in political participation and representation across government have, similarly, continued to face obstacles throughout the deployment of UNMISS. Women have continued to be underrepresented in formal peace negotiations, despite commitments to minimum levels of women's representation as part of transitional governance arrangements and peace agreements. Culturally, some of the gendered roles continue to drive the dynamics of localized conflicts, with the underage marriage of girls common and bride price (an amount paid by the husband to a woman's family) driving cattle-raiding and conflict across the country. Women also have considerably less access to education, meaning an overwhelming proportion of the female population is illiterate. Nonetheless, women have been actively engaged in many informal and localized conflict resolution efforts across the country, despite their lack of access to formal peace processes.<sup>36</sup>

The Security Council has recognized that many barriers exist to the full realization of Resolution 1325 in South Sudan:

"[they would] only be dismantled through dedicated commitment to women's empowerment, participation and human rights, concerted leadership, consistent information and action, and support, to build women's engagement in all levels of decision-making, and through ensuring that the full and meaningful participation and involvement of women in all spheres of political leadership."<sup>37</sup>

Yet part of the challenge for UNMISS is that the government's largely authoritarian approach continues to limit the voice of women in peace efforts. Women-led organizations have to formally register with the government. With many of them being viewed as opposed to government, often they are stymied.<sup>38</sup> Following a march in the capital, Juba in 2018, many of the leaders of different women's groups were summoned and subjected to threats and intimidation by the government's security agencies. UN peacekeeping can have a big role in strengthening the advocacy of women's groups in these environments, through their high-level engagement with the government.

While the current mission mandate, renewed through Resolution 2459, includes a focus on women's participation, particularly the requirement for 35 percent women's representation in parliament as part of the most recent peace agreement, there is considerably more language devoted to sexual and gender-based violence and women's protection by

the mission. Impunity, lack of established rule-of-law mechanisms, and a poorly governed and supported security sector, have contributed to an environment where sexual violence is rife in parts of the country.<sup>39</sup> Through its protection of civilians mandate, UNMISS has afforded some protection to vulnerable groups, including women, in designated sites (referred to as “POC sites” or protection of civilian sites), and in areas where it has been able to project force. However, without significant reforms across the security and justice sectors, as well as political commitment, any initiatives undertaken by UNMISS are unlikely to remain sustainable beyond the deployment of the mission.

Like many countries on the continent, South Sudan has also developed a National Action Plan on WPS, with a duration from 2015–2020. Similar to Liberia, the plan was developed with the support and consultation of the peacekeeping mission, as well as other donors and stakeholders. But the plan has had a very limited impact on addressing some of the challenges that women continue to face.

## CONCLUSIONS

Over the last two decades, UN peacekeeping operations have offered an important vehicle to facilitate the engagement of countries in Africa on women, peace, and security. They have:

- i. Supported efforts to amplify women’s voices in political processes, in government, and as part of conflict resolution initiatives;
- ii. modeled the importance of engaging women in the security sector and positions of leadership;
- iii. supported host governments in their efforts to respond to women’s protection needs (and intervened when they have been unwilling to do so); and
- iv. sought to mainstream the importance of gender across programs directed a long-term peace, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, reform of the security sector, justice and the rule of law, and longer-term peacebuilding initiatives.

Of course, there are limits to what UN peacekeeping can and should do when it comes to advancing women, peace, and security. Peacekeeping is not a panacea when it comes to WPS and has its own flaws in its effort

to integrate WPS across its work. Peacekeepers often come with a limited understanding of the cultural context they are deploying into or the local and regional mechanisms that may be available to them when it comes to WPS. Furthermore, there are some countries that are actively working *against* the work of gender advisers in peacekeeping missions, despite the successes that these roles and functions have been shown to have in contexts such as Liberia. As the Global Study on Resolution 1325 identified in 2015,<sup>40</sup> these measures are often not prioritized. Gender advisers are not deployed at appropriate levels of seniority, women's civil society organizations are not funded adequately and many of the governments where UN peacekeeping missions have been deployed have continued to trample on women's rights and their role in society. These are all different challenges that countries are likely to continue to face, long after a peacekeeping mission has transitioned and departed.

It is difficult to measure progress when it comes to WPS in domestic contexts. Efforts to put in place effective monitoring and evaluation systems as part of the development of National Action Plans have remained a challenge for many countries. Nonetheless, there are some elements and areas of change that reflect whether a country is moving forward, including the levels of women's participation across political, electoral, and governance institutions, whether the levels of their engagement in the security sector are increasing (and if so, whether this is taking place at different levels and roles throughout the organization), and the overall perceptions of women's security across the country, including whether they are feeling safe, whether there is impunity, and whether their rights are being upheld. This is not an exhaustive list. There are many other indicators that can be drawn on.<sup>41</sup> But these highlight some of the pillars where peacekeeping missions tend to engage when it comes to participation, prevention, and protection.

The case studies of Liberia and South Sudan highlight some of the different challenges when it comes to UN peacekeeping missions supporting countries' commitments to WPS. UNMIL and UNMISS had different priorities and experiences in garnering government support and the engagement of civil society. Even with the progress that has been made in Africa at the continental and regional level, each approach by UN peacekeeping missions to WPS at the national and local level in-country must be context-specific to the circumstances on the ground.

Ultimately, UN peacekeeping missions offer an important but limited vehicle for advancing WPS on the African continent. Efforts will need to be increasingly focused on regional and sub-regional approaches to conflict. Similarly, the African Union will increasingly need to invest in its own regional and sub-regional peace operations, including some of the gender mechanisms that have already been deployed in contexts such as Somalia and elsewhere. Africa is well placed with a range of regional and continental mechanisms available to facilitate women's engagement across the continent. Countries on the continent have shown a willingness to lead and engage on the agenda, including through the work of the UN Security Council and multilateral institutions. Perhaps most importantly, women's civil society organizations have shown the way when it comes to leadership and advocacy to take forward reforms to advance women's participation and amplify their voices in peacebuilding initiatives on the continent. Those lessons and experiences offer an important roadmap for the way forward for UN peacekeeping as it continues to work with African partners to advance women's peace and security.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Listen to women, then engage, and build upon the networks that already exist in civil society organizations across the country.* This requires ongoing, meaningful engagement with women. Women need to have influence and be heard. This should be captured in mission assessment and planning processes, as well as peacekeeping mission mandates. It is imperative that UN peacekeeping missions avoid becoming another form of colonialism that neglects the views of those they seek to serve, particularly when it comes to women and their role in society.
2. *African governments and civil society need to be involved at the outset of programs focused on Women, Peace, and Security by UN peacekeeping missions.* Missions need to ensure that programs they develop—often in conjunction with UN country teams, agencies, and international and local non-governmental organizations—build sustainable approaches to WPS within institutions across government and mechanisms to engage effectively with civil society. National Action Plans on WPS offer one approach to facilitate this engagement.

3. *Ensure that missions are making themselves obsolete in order to advance gender equality.* This requires that equality becomes “business as usual” for the country’s political leaders. In some countries, there is still much to do. But where leaders are not supportive of this agenda, regional and continental mechanisms to compel change need to be enforced.

## NOTES

1. United Nations Security Council, *Letter dated 12 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations address to the Secretary-General*, UN Doc S/2000/693, July 14, 2000.
2. United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) was deployed to Namibia from April 1989 to March 1990.
3. United Nations Security Council, *Letter dated 12 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations*.
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5. Lisa Sharland, *Women, Gender and the A4P Agenda: An Opportunity for Action?*, Background Paper, Challenges Annual Forum 2018.
6. World Bank and United Nations, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018), xxiii.
7. Resolutions 1325 (2000); 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019).
8. Toni Haastrup, “WPS and the African Union,” in *The Oxford Handbook on Women, Peace and Security*, Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True (eds.) (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 378; and African Union Commission, Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa, Addis Ababa, 2016, 6.
9. United Nations Security Council, *Letter dated 12 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations*, 2.
10. Missions that have deployed to the continent since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 include MINUCI (Côte d’Ivoire), UNMIL (Liberia), UNOCI (Cote d’Ivoire), ONUB (Burundi), UNMIS (Sudan), UNAMID (Darfur), MINURCAT (Central African Republic/Chad), MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of the Congo), UNMISS (South Sudan), UNISFA (Abyei), MINUSMA (Mali) and MINUSCA (Central African Republic).

11. United Nations-World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (2018), 117.
12. United Nations, *Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations* (2017), paras 8 and 9.
13. Haastrup, "WPS and the African Union," 378.
14. Ibid., 379.
15. African Union Commission, *Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa* (July 2016), 6.
16. African Union Commission, *Continental Results Framework—Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa (2018–2028)* (Addis Ababa, 2019), 3.
17. Côte D'Ivoire, Uganda, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Rwanda, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Burundi, Senegal, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Mali, Togo, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Kenya, South Sudan, Niger, Angola, Cameroon, and Mozambique.
18. African Union Commission, *Continental Results Framework—Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa (2018–2028)* (Addis Ababa, 2019), 4.
19. Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*, 20
20. United Nations, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (2015), 14.
21. Sabrina Karim, "Delivering WPS Protection in All Female Peacekeeping Force: The Case of Liberia," in *The Oxford Handbook on Women, Peace and Security*, *The Oxford Handbook on Women, Peace and Security*, Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True (eds.) (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 451.
22. United Nations, *Gender Mainstreaming in Peacekeeping Operations: Liberia 2003–2009*, 3.
23. United Nations S/RES/1509, operational paragraph 11.
24. United Nations, *Gender Mainstreaming in Peacekeeping Operations: Liberia 2003–2009*, 3.
25. Ibid., 4.
26. Although ECOWAS had been engaged in peace operations in the country through ECOMOG at the time.
27. Karim, "Delivering WPS Protection in All Female Peacekeeping Force," 451.
28. United Nations, *Gender Mainstreaming in Peacekeeping Operations: Liberia 2003–2009*, 30.

29. United Nations, “In a First for UN peacekeeping, All-Female Police Unit Arrives in Liberia,” January 30, 2007, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2007/01/207362-first-un-peacekeeping-all-female-police-unit-arrives-liberia>.
30. Karim, “Delivering WPS Protection in All Female Peacekeeping Force,” 458.
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32. See, for instance, Laura Bacon, *Liberia’s Gender Sensitive Police Reform—Starting from Scratch? Improving Representation and Responsiveness* (UNU Wider, October 2013); and United Nations, *Gender Mainstreaming in Peacekeeping Operations: Liberia 2003–2009*, 30.
33. United Nations, *Report of the Secretary General, Women and Peace and Security*, S/2019/800, October 9, 2019, 24.
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35. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2996 (2011).
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38. Kezie-Nwoha and Were, “Women’s Informal Peace Efforts: Grassroots Activism in South Sudan.”
39. UN News, “Endemic Sexual Violence Surging in South Sudan: UN Human Rights Office,” February 15, 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1032831>.
40. See United Nations, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, 2015, 279.
41. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and Peace Research Institute Oslo, *Women, Peace and Security Index 2019/20: Tracking Sustainable Peace through Inclusion, Justice, and Security for Women*. Washington, DC, 2019.

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## CHAPTER 8

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# Local Peace Committees and Grassroots Peacebuilding in Africa

*Fritz Nganje*

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes the role of local peace committees (LPCs) as mechanisms for microlevel peacebuilding in Africa. Since the end of the Cold War, LPCs have been used globally as mechanisms to promote sustainable peace, against the backdrop of changing conflict dynamics and a new peacebuilding discourse that valorized the local context, local initiatives, and local agency in peacebuilding processes. The so-called “local turn” in peacebuilding inspired support for diverse forms of grassroots peacebuilding initiatives, not least in Africa, which have generally been identified with the generic term of “local peace committees.” In taking stock of the practices and evolution of LPCs in Africa over the past 30 years, this chapter seeks to highlight the key issues that have animated

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grassroots peacebuilding during this period, while also identifying valuable lessons and best practices that could form the basis for improving this approach to peacebuilding in Africa.

The chapter is structured in four sections. The first section provides an overview of the peacebuilding the role of LPCs in Africa over the past three decades, coinciding with the ascendancy and evolution of the global discourse on “peacebuilding from below.” The second section identifies and analyzes some of the key issues, lessons, and best practices that stand out from 30 years of grassroots peacebuilding through a variety of LPCs. The third and final section offers three policy recommendations for unlocking the full potential of LPCs.

## EVOLUTION OF LOCAL PEACE COMMITTEES AS MECHANISMS FOR GRASSROOTS PEACEBUILDING IN AFRICA

Local peace committee is a generic name for a variety of local structures established for purposes of peacemaking and peacebuilding, using both traditional and modern conflict resolution mechanisms. LPCs are envisioned as organic, inclusive, participatory, and non-threatening social spaces that facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding, and allow for constructive problem-solving and joint action to prevent violence.<sup>1</sup> They have, therefore, been described as instruments that strengthen social cohesion and the resilience of local communities, thereby contributing to the search for sustainable peace beyond the immediate local environment.<sup>2</sup> Local peace committees are founded on the premise that individuals in communities affected by violent conflict have greater incentives than any external actor to resolve such conflict. They are also thought to be better placed to build and sustain peace through their intimate knowledge of the local culture, as well as community relations and dynamics. In this regard, the concept of LPCs resonates with the “peacebuilding from below” discourse, which gained prominence in the 1990s and argued for local communities affected by violent conflict to be recognized as resources and not just recipients of peacebuilding efforts that are largely driven from the outside.<sup>3</sup>

### *Emergence of Local Peace Committees in Africa as Self-Help Community Initiatives*

In Africa, “local peace” committees arose as mechanisms for grassroots peacebuilding in the 1990s when local communities affected by violent conflict resorted to diverse self-help structures to facilitate dialogue, manage conflict and promote peaceful coexistence. Local peace committees in this context were essentially self-organizing community initiatives that emerged organically to fill the void left by national and international peacebuilding efforts, and generally drew on traditional African conflict resolution practices. In Kenya, for example, the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) was established in 1995 through the efforts of a small group of women in response to recurrent violent conflict that had virtually crippled life in Wajir County. As Kaitlyn Hedditch noted, this homegrown peace initiative was the last resort to restoring some degree of normalcy in the Wajir district after international actors working to bring peace in the area pulled out following the killing of a United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) pilot and aid worker in September 1993.<sup>4</sup> Although it would eventually engage with district authorities, the Wajir peace initiative originated with and was led by peace crusaders within the conflict-affected communities, who through sensitization campaigns and mediating among clan elders “succeeded in implementing and maintaining peace in the district.”<sup>5</sup> The relative success of the Wajir peace committee in arresting the tide of violence in the district inspired the establishment of similar structures in other districts in northern Kenya in the 1990s. Local peace committees also became the preferred mechanism for resolving cross-border disputes along Kenya’s borders with Somalia and Ethiopia.<sup>6</sup>

Similar examples of indigenous peacebuilding initiatives were recorded during this period in other African countries, such as Ghana and Burundi. In the case of the former, local peacebuilding initiatives spearheaded by civil society formations, based primarily on a methodology that combined community dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation, were credited with contributing to restoring relative peace and stability in the northern part of the country which had experienced high levels of inter- and intra-communal violent conflict between 1990 and 2002.<sup>7</sup>

In Burundi, LPCs emerged in the mid-1990s as informal mechanisms for dialogue, conflict management, reconciliation, and social rehabilitation to complement the official Arusha Peace Process that ended a decade-long civil war. The first of such structures, the Kibimba Peace Committee established in 1994, inspired the formation of LPCs across Burundi by playing an effective role in restoring trust among rival Hutu and Tutsi, and rebuilding the social fabric of a community that had been torn apart by inter-ethnic atrocities during the civil war.<sup>8</sup>

### *Toward the Formalization of Local Peace Committees in Africa*

Arguably, it was in South Africa that local peace committees were first institutionalized and given a formal mandate to localize a national peace process in an African country. Following the signing of the National Peace Accord (NPA) in 1991 as part of South Africa's political transition, a nationwide network of peace committees was established. Within this framework, LPCs were charged with facilitating dialogue, building tolerance, and addressing issues of conflict through mediation and problem-solving approaches.<sup>9</sup> Andries Odendaal argued that, thanks in part to their institutionalization and the material and technical support that came with this, LPCs played an important role in mitigating the violent effect that South Africa's volatile transition had on local communities. However, he also observed that as part of a top-down peace process, LPCs did not always enjoy the support of local actors. What is more, their peacebuilding role was constrained by the deep polarization that characterized the transition, and the fact that both the NPA and LPCs were ill-equipped to resolve the greater structural conditions of inequality that caused conflict within the South African society.<sup>10</sup> As a result of these and other challenges, South Africa's formal LPCs fell into disuse after the country's political transition in 1994.<sup>11</sup>

The trend toward the formalization of LPCs in Africa became more prominent in the first part of the twenty-first century, amidst new and intractable peacebuilding challenges, which had prompted African leaders to adopt a resolution in 2002 requesting African countries to establish national frameworks to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts.<sup>12</sup> New thinking within the “peacebuilding from below” discourse, which cautioned against taking for granted the peacebuilding potential of the local context, and questioned the dichotomy often maintained between local, national, and international peacebuilding initiatives,<sup>13</sup> also

contributed to efforts at institutionalizing LPCs by giving prominence to ideas such as Infrastructure for Peace (I4P). As a concept, I4P is loosely defined as “a network of interdependent systems, resources, values and skills held by government, civil society, and community institutions that promote dialogue and consultation; prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation when violence occurs in a society.”<sup>14</sup> Proponents of I4P argue that it affords local actors and communities the opportunity to “call on political and infrastructural resources at national [and international levels],” while still rooting their peacebuilding initiatives in the relevant local context, history, and culture.<sup>15</sup> It is, therefore, seen as an alternative peacebuilding approach with the potential to transform the power dynamics inherent in, and harness the positive aspects of, the relationship between local, state, and international actors.

Ghana is the first African country that has in recent years taken steps to recognize, formalize, and incorporate LPCs into a national peace infrastructure. Inspired by the relative success of local peacemaking and peacebuilding processes, the Ghanaian government, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established a peace architecture in 2005 composed of national, regional, and district peace councils with mandates to facilitate dialogue, problem-solving, and reconciliation processes throughout the country. Peace councils are supported administratively and technically by a Peacebuilding Support Unit within the Ministry of the Interior. Although it is yet to be fully institutionalized, Ghana’s national peace architecture is believed to have contributed to defusing political tension during the highly contested 2008 and 2012 elections, and is seen as a model for harnessing local peace processes to promote peace and security at the national level.<sup>16</sup>

In Kenya, early attempts to formalize LPCs can be traced to 2001 when the government established the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management, which was tasked with formulating a national conflict management and peacebuilding policy, and coordinating various peacebuilding initiatives, including LPCs. However, it was in the aftermath of the 2007 post-election violence that a concerted effort was made to institutionalize a national peace architecture on the back of existing local peace structures. Odendaal argued that “the fact that districts with peace committees reported much less violence than others considerably raised awareness of the importance of enhancing local capacities for peace.”<sup>17</sup> The 2008 National Accord and Reconciliation Agreement that ended the violence recommended the establishment

of district peace committees throughout the country. With the support of external donors such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), peace committees have since been created and capacitated in almost every district in Kenya, and have become key components of an evolving national architecture for peacebuilding and conflict management, albeit with mixed outcomes.<sup>18</sup>

Ethiopia represents a rather unique case of the formalization of LPCs in Africa. Since 2009, LPCs have become an integral part of the state's conflict prevention and resolution mechanism. What is more, LPCs in Ethiopia's border areas that form part of East Africa's Karamoja and Somali clusters have also been integrated into the subregional mechanism for conflict early warning and early response under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). IGAD's early warning and early response mechanism relies on the activities of a network of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in each of its member states, coordinated by national Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Units (CEWERU). In Ethiopia, local peace committees play a significant role in localizing the mandate of the subregional mechanism for preventing, de-escalating, and resolving pastoral and related conflicts along the country's borders with Kenya, Somalia, and South Sudan. LPCs in turn receive financial, technical, and material support from IGAD's Rapid Response Fund.<sup>19</sup>

### *The Ascendancy of NGO-Sponsored Local Peace Committees*

In those African countries where persistent social conflict has generated a strong need for concerted efforts to capitalize on grassroots mechanisms for peacebuilding and social cohesion, but there has not been an appetite to institutionalize these structures, it is often local and international NGOs that have stepped in to support and, in some instances, create LPCs. This is the case in Burundi where despite the relative successes of LPCs in restoring the social fabric of communities in the war-torn country, local peace processes have unfolded without governmental support or an overarching peace architecture. Instead, it is national and international NGOs, such as the Ministry for Peace and Reconciliation Under the Cross (MI-PAREC) and the British-based Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD), that have been instrumental in creating and supporting LPCs as part of their peacebuilding and reconciliation strategies in the country.<sup>20</sup> Inspired by the

first LPC established by the residents of Kibimba in 1994, it is estimated that by 2012 NGOs had established and were supporting about 450 local peace committees in over 30 percent of the communes in Burundi.<sup>21</sup>

A similar trend can be observed in South Africa against the backdrop of increasing violence and social unrest in the country's impoverished townships and informal urban settlements, including xenophobic intolerance against migrants from other African countries. For example, in response to the large-scale xenophobic violence that killed more than 60 people in major urban areas across South Africa in 2008, the Action Support Centre (ASC), a Johannesburg-based NGO, launched an initiative in 2010 to harness the positive legacy of LPCs that were created during South Africa's transition but had since become defunct. The ASC has worked to revive LPCs in major hotspots of xenophobic conflict in townships and impoverished suburbs around Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Durban. It provides continued technical, logistical, and moral support to LPCs, mostly in the form of training in mediation and conflict transformation, but also through initiatives such as the Local Peacebuilders Awards, which recognize individual and community efforts dedicated to promoting peace and social cohesion in these townships and suburbs.<sup>22</sup> Local peace committees in this context have used a combination of community dialogues, mediation, as well as education and awareness campaigns to attempt to resolve differences and foster mutual understanding and reconciliation between foreign nationals and their South African hosts.<sup>23</sup> They have also reportedly been instrumental in arresting the spread of violence during the recent 2019–2020 episodes of xenophobic unrest, playing a major role in alerting the police and other relevant authorities to potential attacks, and mobilizing communities to protect foreign nationals and their properties.<sup>24</sup>

### THREE DECADES OF LOCAL PEACE COMMITTEES: KEY ISSUES AND LESSONS LEARNED

For the purpose of highlighting pertinent lessons that could assist in strengthening local peacebuilding processes on the continent, this section identifies and discusses five key issues and best practices that stand out from the preceding review of the peacebuilding role of LPCs in Africa. These relate to the formalization, or lack thereof, of LPCs; their relationship with formal institutions and processes of governance; the scope of

intervention of; contradictions in the peacebuilding role of LPCs, as well as the issue of external funding and support.

### *To Formalize or Not to Formalize?*

Perhaps the major issue that has defined the peacebuilding role of LPCs in Africa is how to reconcile the dilemma: between retaining the essentially informal character of these structures and reaping the benefits that come with formalization. As pointed out earlier, the value proposition of the notion of local peace committee rests primarily on the argument that peacebuilding initiatives that are anchored in the resources and everyday experiences of local communities, as opposed to being externally imposed, have a greater chance of success and sustainability. The relative success of pioneering LPCs in countries like Kenya, Ghana, and Burundi has, therefore, been attributed largely to their informality, which encouraged dynamism in, as well as local participation and ownership of, peacebuilding processes. Informality also means that the work of LPCs is not hamstrung by the politicking that often undermines the effectiveness and efficiency of formal peacebuilding processes.

However, as the South African case suggests, informality can also pose a challenge to the effectiveness of LPCs. In the post-apartheid period, LPCs operating as informal community structures have been constrained in their peacebuilding role by their lack of institutional legitimacy and the corresponding inability to influence the formal processes of governance. Local peace committees in this context have also received little support and cooperation from state agencies, making it difficult for them to effectively address local conflicts that are embedded in the broader political, social, and economic structure of the state. The present situation contrasts with the experience of LPCs that operated in South Africa in the 1990s. Because these earlier structures were institutionalized as part of a national peace architecture, and were endowed with a formal mandate to localize the transitional peace process, they had access to material, technical, and institutional support from the state. This formalization was crucial in empowering LPCs to play an important role in mitigating the violent effect that South Africa's volatile transition had on local communities, even though the top-down nature of the peace process meant that LPCs did not always enjoy the support of local actors.<sup>25</sup>

It is partly in an attempt to reconcile this dilemma that the idea of I4P has gained prominence in discourses on peacebuilding in Africa. National

and regional peace architectures that have been established in Ghana, Kenya, and other parts of East Africa hold the prospects of “[creating] sufficient space for local leaders to establish structures and processes that suit their situation best and that will enhance their sense of local ownership and achievement... [while allowing] local communities to call on political and infrastructural resources at national [and regional levels].”<sup>26</sup> However, the existence of national peace infrastructures is no guarantee that LPCs will have a constructive relationship with the formal institutions and processes of governance.

### *Relationship with Formal Institutions and Processes of the State*

Whether operating as informal or institutionalized mechanisms, local peace committees cannot escape the influence of formal institutions and processes. The effectiveness of the peacebuilding role of LPCs, therefore, depends to a large extent on the nature and quality of their relationship with the formal institutions and processes of the state. This relationship takes on various forms. Firstly, LPCs often rely on their association with state institutions to legitimize and garner broad support for their peacebuilding activities. However, the involvement of local authorities in the work of LPCs has sometimes had a constraining rather than an enabling effect. Elected officials, in particular, have tended to infiltrate LPCs for purposes of using these structures to promote their narrow political ends. Because LPCs generally lack enforcement capacity and often rely on their moral authority, the absence of a cooperative relationship with local officials and other state agencies such as the police has, in some instances, also undermined the efficacy of their peacebuilding initiatives. In other cases, LPCs have been forced to assume a subordinate and largely ineffective role because their mandate and functions overlap with those of local state structures.

The complementarity between the methods used by LPCs and existing institutional processes is also a key determinant of the peacebuilding effectiveness. For example, in South Africa where a Mozambican national was gruesomely murdered during the wave of xenophobic violence in 2015, the local peace committee in the township of Alexandra was able to complement the formal judicial process of prosecution with a traditional process of forgiveness and healing, which, according to a member of the Alexandra LPC, brought some degree of reconciliation to the affected

families. A member of the Alexandra local peace committee describes the relationship of their intervention to the formal judicial process as follows:

Two of the families of the boys who killed Sithole [the murdered Mozambican national] wanted to talk to the bereaved family. All the families wanted was to say “sorry,” but that process was not allowed because according to our formal justice system the two parties should be separated. I told the families to write a letter expressing their apology which I took to the Sithole family. Sithole’s family read the letter and said they forgive them, but the total and true forgiveness will come when the family of Mthethwa [one of the accused] goes to the grave of the deceased and apologises according to our culture.<sup>27</sup>

Where this complementarity is lacking, the tension between the preferred peacebuilding methods of local peace committees and the institutional processes of the state has tended to constrain the role of LPCs. This is the case in Kenya, where the use of customary conflict management and peacebuilding methods by LPCs has sometimes come up against the constitutional values and justice system of the state.<sup>28</sup> There have been instances where court orders have been used to challenge and inhibit the work of LPCs.<sup>29</sup> A legal and policy framework that clearly defines the role and mandate of LPCs in relation to the formal institutions of the state is, therefore, critical for the effectiveness of these structures.

### *Scope of Local Peace Committee Intervention*

Another important lesson that stands out from the review of local peace committees in Africa over the past three decades relates to what LPCs can do and what they cannot be expected to achieve. As the cases highlighted above suggest, LPCs are most effective in the context of low-key community conflicts that can be addressed using dialogue, mediation, or other problem-solving approaches. LPCs are generally ill-suited for conflict situations that require the enforcement of peace, as they are often designed to be essentially consensus-building forums. This is particularly true for informal LPCs, which lack institutional legitimacy and depend largely on their moral authority for acceptance in the local environment in which they operate.

Even in cases where LPCs are formalized, it would be naïve to expect them to make any significant contribution to resolving conflicts that are

rooted in the socio-economic and political structure of the state, especially in the absence of a commitment by the relevant authorities to address the underlying causes of conflict. As Odendaal has observed, “LPCs will not be successful when there is a lack of political will toward peace at national level [and] it cannot be expected of LPCs to address the root causes of conflict, namely the larger political, social, or economic systems.”<sup>30</sup> In this regard, LPCs can play a role in mitigating the effects of violent conflicts in their communities, but are often powerless in transforming the dynamics of the conflict and bringing about sustainable peace.

Likewise, although in countries like South Africa local peace committees have been instrumental in resolving disputes arising from inefficiencies and perceived corruption in the processes of local governance, LPCs cannot be expected to assume the service delivery and community safety functions of local governments for which they have no mandate. They can collaborate with relevant local government structures and facilitate the efficient and equitable delivery of social services, but should, at all times, resist the temptation of taking on local government functions that would dilute their core peacebuilding role.

### *Local Peace Committees as Sites for Social Contestation and Normative Contradictions*

In principle, LPCs are intended as inclusive and non-threatening social spaces that promote broad stakeholder participation in the common search for peace and harmony. However, a closer look at the history of LPCs on the continent suggests that these same characteristics can be an impediment to micro-level peacebuilding. The imperative for inclusiveness means that LPCs sometimes include local actors who have no vested interest in peace, but see these structures primarily as forums for extending their influence and promoting their narrow political and economic interests.

In this context, LPCs become sites for power struggles between different social interests, often at the expense of efforts to foster peace and social cohesion in the respective communities. In the aftermath of the 2015 xenophobic unrest in major urban areas across South Africa, efforts by the Orange Farm LPC to promote reconciliation between foreign nationals and their South African counterparts were held hostage by political party posturing within the committee. Community dialogues convened by the local peace committee “were marred by political jostling

by ANC members who refused to allow the meetings to continue unless the ANC branch chairperson facilitated proceedings.”<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, while LPCs draw significant strength and legitimacy from being rooted in the local culture and processes, this local embeddedness also means that they almost invariably replicate the power structures that prevail in the communities in which they operate. Working through, instead of attempting to transform, traditional power structures that are oppressive and discriminatory may enable local peace committees to earn the cooperation of local power brokers, but this compromise has implications for the nature of the peace that LPCs are able to create. For example, Kaitlyn Hedditch noted that accounts of the success of the Wajir peace committee in Kenya often mask “the challenging circumstances through which [the women at the center of the initiative] were forced to both assert and compromise their agency,” in an attempt to simultaneously accommodate and challenge traditionally ascribed gender roles.<sup>32</sup>

In South Africa, where a xenophobic attitude is entrenched in the dominant power structure prevailing in townships and informal settlements, some LPCs have tended to embody and reproduce the marginalization of, and discrimination against, migrants from other African countries. For example, the LPC in Orange Farm has been used by local politicians, business people, and other dominant interest groups to informally exercise control over the existence and activities of migrants residing in the township.<sup>33</sup>

These inherent contradictions in the role of LPCs do not only undermine their peacebuilding effectiveness, but also raise questions about their accountability. LPCs often lack formal accountability mechanisms, and tend to rely on the principles of inclusiveness, participation, and transparency to safeguard the integrity of their activities and outcomes. The restraining effect of these principles is sometimes trumped by contending norms and unequal power relations in the local communities in which LPCs are embedded.

### *Funding and External Support*

The issue of funding and external support has been a contentious theme in the evolution of LPCs as peacebuilding mechanisms in Africa. Although many LPCs in Africa started their work relying almost exclusively on community resources, they have tended to depend on external support to sustain their peacebuilding activities. Financial, technical, institutional, or

even moral support for LPCs in Africa has come from local and national governments, donor agencies like USAID, intergovernmental and multi-lateral development organizations such as IGAD and the UNDP, as well as a variety of international and local NGOs.

Historically, external support for LPCs in Africa has produced mixed outcomes. On the one hand, some LPCs established by NGOs have become so dependent on external funding and support that they have been unable to operate on their own. Similarly, it has been reported that in countries like Kenya and Liberia where NGOs have paid so-called “sitting fees” to peace monitors, this has destroyed the spirit of volunteerism and undermined the very essence of local peace committees as community-inspired and community-owned initiatives.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, as noted above, it has been thanks to the involvement and support of external actors that many LPCs have been able to sustain their activities over an extended period of time. The centrality of external support is underscored by the recent trend in which some LPCs in South Africa and Kenya have opted to transform themselves into NGOs in order to be eligible for donor funding. There is a need for more empirical research to better understand the implications of external support for the autonomy and effectiveness of local peace committees. It is, however, clear from the cases discussed above that LPCs could, at the very least, benefit from some financial, logistical, and technical support. The lingering challenge is how to ensure that external involvement does not compromise their indigenous character.

## CONCLUSION

Grassroots initiatives for peacebuilding and social cohesion have a long history in African societies. However, it was the post-Cold War local orientation in peacebuilding, embodied in the concept of peacebuilding from below, that gave greater prominence to these initiatives within “mainstream” peacebuilding discourses and practices. The prevalence of LPCs as mechanisms for micro-level peacebuilding across the continent should be seen in this context. The experience of three decades of LPCs discussed in this chapter can be summarized in two overarching lessons.

First, the principles of local initiative and local agency that underpin the idea of LPCs are necessary but not sufficient peacebuilding requirements. This is because the local context itself is as much a terrain for the reinforcement of oppressive and violence-breeding tendencies as it is a catalyst

for building sustainable peace. The fact that LPCs are embedded in these complex local environments presents both opportunities and challenges for peacebuilding.

Second, the effectiveness of LPCs is strengthened when these initiatives are conceived as a complement to broader national, regional, or international peacebuilding processes. Against the backdrop of the complex and multi-level nature of contemporary conflicts, it is naïve to imagine that grassroots initiatives can, on their own, resolve the multiple threats to local peace and social cohesion. In many instances, local conflicts and insecurity are intertwined with national, regional, and even global dynamics so that even with the best of intentions, local actors often lack the authority and capacity to act decisively. This then calls for a collaborative peacebuilding framework that links local, national, regional, as well as global initiatives and resources, although care must be taken to ensure that local agency is not stifled in the process.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Create an enabling legal and policy framework for local peace committees.* African governments can contribute to creating an enabling environment for local peace committees by putting in place appropriate legal and policy frameworks that clearly define the role and mandate of LPCs in relation to existing peacebuilding and governance institutions. While the formalization of LPCs is not a prerequisite for their effectiveness, and in some instances can even be an impediment, it is still imperative for these structures to be institutionally recognized and protected. This will not only provide institutional support for LPCs, but will also eliminate potential overlap and conflict between LPCs and state institutions. An appropriate legal and policy framework will also help to address the accountability deficit that many LPCs face. This is particularly useful in those countries that are yet to establish a national peace infrastructure.
2. *Incorporate local peace committees into all new post-conflict peacebuilding initiatives.* Subsequent United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) post-conflict peacebuilding missions should include a mandate to support and integrate LPCs into their respective national peacebuilding strategies. As observed earlier, local peace committees can be effective mechanisms for localizing national peace efforts.

Recognizing LPCs as an integral part of the post-conflict peace-building frameworks of the UN and the AU, while also respecting their autonomy and uniqueness, will assure these local structures of the resources as well as the institutional legitimacy and support needed to make a meaningful contribution to the peaceful and sustainable transformation of post-conflict environments in Africa.

3. *Establish national and regional networks of local peace committees.* International actors like the UN and Western donors can contribute to developing the peacebuilding capacity of local peace committees in Africa by establishing and supporting national and regional networks of LPCs to serve as platforms for facilitated peer learning and support, as well as the sharing of experiences and best practices. These mechanisms can be used to strengthen the capacity and performance of individual LPCs without directly interfering in their operations or making them dependent on outside support.

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## CHAPTER 9

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# Three Decades of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Africa: Lessons Learned and Challenges Ahead

*Anatole Ayissi*

We are living in dangerous times. Protracted conflicts are causing unspeakable human suffering. Armed groups are proliferating, equipped with a vast array of weapons. As armed conflicts grow more deadly, destructive and complex, we need a new focus on disarmament that saves lives.<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an analysis of three decades of efforts to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate former combatants as part of conflict resolution

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This chapter represents the personal views of the author.

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and post-conflict peace consolidation, particularly in contexts of peace-keeping operations carried out by the United Nations. The chapter reviews the evolution of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs in Africa over the last 30 years, highlighting, in particular, trends and challenges relating to their implementation as well as the lessons learned and the best practices recorded. It concludes with a few observations on the future of DDR in Africa, as well as practical recommendations to policymakers and practitioners, taking expressly into consideration the prevalent conflict landscape in Africa, made up of “the continuing volatility of local conflict dynamics,”<sup>2</sup> which is aggravated by the mounting scourge of violent extremism, terrorism,<sup>3</sup> and the “democratization of armed violence” in a number of countries and areas.

DDR is defined as an operation that consists of the assembly and cantonment of ex-combatants, consistent with the provisions of a peace agreement, with a view to collecting their weapons, disbanding their formal military framework, and assisting them in reintegrating into society, either as civilians or formal members of national armed or security (e.g., national police, gendarmerie) forces.<sup>4</sup>

## DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION, AND REINTEGRATION IN AFRICA: CONTEXTS AND CONTENTS

The “Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation” (DDRR<sup>5</sup>) of ex-combatants has emerged as a major pillar for post-conflict peace consolidation in Africa. For a number of peace processes and operations on the continent, the quality of DDR implementation ranks high on the list of the criteria against which the probability of a country recovering from crisis to relapse into violence is assessed. As stated by Colonel (rtd.) Prosper Nzekani Zena of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), experience shows that “incomplete or poorly conceived disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) initiatives have been key factors to high rates of conflict relapse in Africa.”<sup>6</sup> Successfully implemented DDR programs, however, give the stronger chances to conflict resolution and post-conflict peace. Indeed, the rationale behind the need to respond urgently to the challenge of ex-combatants after conflict is that “DDR programs are essential in helping to prevent the recurrence of war in post-conflict situations.”<sup>7</sup>

An overview of DDR programs in Africa over the last three decades shows that these programs have been carried out in two broad crisis

contexts. Some DDR programs are initiated as part of efforts toward addressing a security crisis provoked by inadequacies and deficits in the national security sector, with a view to implementing a national security sector reform (SSR) strategy. Though a significant number of African countries have carried out such programs, especially southern and West African countries, experience shows that the vast majority of DDR programs in Africa are, instead, carried out in the context of the implementation of a peace agreement, generally concluded between the protagonists of a civil war.

When adopting its standards and operational rules pertaining to the implementation of DDR programs ten years ago, the United Nations took note of the growing demand for DDR, stressing that especially since the late 1980s, the international community had “increasingly been called upon to support the implementation of DDR programs in countries emerging from conflict,”<sup>8</sup> including African countries in particular. Indeed, as of 2019, over two-thirds of the 54 African countries have implemented DDR programs in the context of a peace process, often with the assistance of the United Nations.<sup>9</sup>

### THIRTY YEARS OF DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION, AND REINTEGRATION IN AFRICA: ISSUES, TRENDS AND LESSONS LEARNED

One of the major lessons learned from these programs is that the fate of DDR is shaped by changes and evolutions in UN peace operations. In a keynote address delivered during a meeting on DDR in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire in 2017, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, emphasized this connection between “the nature of DDR operations and peacekeeping.”<sup>10</sup> She recalled “how crucial the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes are to sustaining peace.” She stressed that “over the past three decades, DDR has become an integral part of peace operations across the globe [and] has played a key role in violence prevention, stabilization and support to political processes.” She noted that “this crucial contribution to sustaining peace is manifested in successful DDR programs, as witnessed in Central America, Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and—of course—Côte d’Ivoire.”<sup>11</sup>

*Africa, a Major Host of Disarmament, Demobilization,  
and Reintegration Programs*

The fact that four out of the five examples cited above are from Africa is not a coincidence. Since the inception of the first major United Nations DDR programs in Central America about three decades ago,<sup>12</sup> the African continent has been the most important host for DDR programs.<sup>13</sup> In 2006, the Secretary-General of the United Nations revealed that between February 2000 and March 2006, “six peacekeeping operations have included disarmament, demobilization and reintegration as part of their mandate,” among which five were in Africa: the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL); the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI); the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB); and the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS).<sup>14</sup> Three years later, in 2009, the World Bank estimated that two-thirds of the over 30 countries where DDR programs have been implemented over the last 20 years are in Africa.<sup>15</sup>

As of 2020, there were 13 peacekeeping operations active globally, many with a DDR component. Half of these operations are in Africa: Western Sahara, the Central African Republic, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur, Abyei (the border between Sudan and South Sudan), and South Sudan.<sup>16</sup> DDR is a major priority for all of these operations. For many of them, DDR has proved to be a strong imperative for a timely and efficient implementation of signed peace agreements.

From the quantitative standpoint, hundreds of thousands of ex-combatants have been disarmed and demobilized in Africa over the last decades, thus contributing significantly to increasing chances for sustainable peace and recovery after crises.<sup>17</sup> Overall, available data show that close to one million ex-combatants have gone through formal DDR programs since the late 1980s. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone, 209,605 ex-combatants had gone through DDR by March 2011,<sup>18</sup> while over 100,000 ex-combatants were disarmed, demobilized, and sent back to regular life at the end of the civil war in Liberia, and about 93,000 ex-combatants were the subject of DDR in Mozambique.<sup>19</sup> In addition, 72,490 and 80,000 ex-combatants underwent DDR in Sierra Leone and Angola, respectively.<sup>20</sup> The most recently concluded DDR program in Africa was in Côte d’Ivoire, where a total of 69,505 ex-combatants were disarmed and demobilized between October 2012 and June 2015. Thus, in terms of numbers, DDR has achieved tremendous success in Africa.

This is good news for peace and recovery, since the “process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has repeatedly proved to be vital to stabilizing a post-conflict situation” and “to reducing the likelihood of renewed violence.”<sup>21</sup>

However, the analysis in the next section will show that this success has to be appreciated against the background of a great deficit of qualitative outcomes in many DDR programs. In practice, many DDR programs have essentially been about the “DD,” while the most critical “R” generally remains unaddressed. Many DDR programs have also suffered a lack credibility stemming from the inherent fragility of the peace agreements which gave rise to them. Yet when done well, the evidence is clear that DDR can “make a key contribution to strengthening confidence between former factions and enhancing the momentum toward stability.”<sup>22</sup>

### *Africa as a “Living Laboratory”<sup>23</sup> for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration*

Africa has also proved to be an important “laboratory” for DDR experiments, in particular in the context of rapidly changing post-Cold War conflict settings. In the 2000s, as new conflict landscapes were emerging in Africa—and the rest of the world<sup>24</sup>—many DDR programs increasingly faced difficulties and could not be implemented as provided for in peace agreements. The then Secretary-General of the United Nations, in a report to the General Assembly, noted that “while the scale, complexity, scope and type of the United Nations work in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration have changed, our means of planning and implementing such operations have not.” He warned that this has ultimately led “at worst [...] to disillusioned ex-combatants returning to arms.” The resurgence of armed violence amidst peace processes in these countries led the Secretary-General to recognize that “the narrow focus on short-term security goals,” when it comes to implementing DDR programs, was inefficient, if not counterproductive, for post-conflict recovery and peace consolidation. He recommended “to capture systematically lessons learned from previous disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs and to ensure that the lessons are rigorously applied in future operations.”<sup>25</sup> The exceptionally tough challenges that UN peacekeeping operations met in Africa, including in places such as Sierra Leone and Somalia, greatly informed the thinking that followed

these recommendations and which, in 2010, led the UN to develop “the ‘second generation’ DDR.”<sup>26</sup>

A major emerging trend in the “transformation of conflict” taken into consideration when crafting the second generation of DDR was the mounting threat of what Jairo Munive and Finn Stepputat called “Armed Non-Statutory Actors” (ANSAs), i.e., those spoilers who were neither part of national armed forces nor “non-state” (rebel) armed groups formally part of the process of implementation of peace agreements. An ANSA was defined as an “organized group with a basic structure of command operating outside state control that uses force, or the threat of force, to achieve its objectives [...], ranging from insurgent armies and militias to vigilantes and urban gangs, exercise some degree of control over territory and populations, and they may develop levels of organization similar to or even surpassing that of statutory armies.”<sup>27</sup>

In line with this analysis, when crafting the second generation of DDR, Munive and Stepputat underscored that while “in the 1990s, international DDR programs were used mostly to deal with statutory and insurgent armies following peace accords to which the warring parties were signatories, since then, however, other types of armed actors, such as militias, have grown in importance and have influenced the stability of governments and the security of civilian populations by demonstrating a high degree of flexibility and [...] adaptability to shifting circumstances.”<sup>28</sup> The ongoing conflict in the eastern DRC, which has now lasted over 20 years, is one of the most emblematic illustrations of this situation.

As a “response to the shifting anatomy of armed conflict,” the DDR concept was radically reconfigured, especially “to deal with armed groups while conflict is still ongoing and without a negotiated peace accord being in place,” and also to address “situations of armed conflict that involve hybrid forms of violence as well as a range of armed actors that control, or influence significantly, populations and territories, without being part of peace negotiations or under direct state control,” as is the case, for instance, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sudan, and Somalia, where “militias have become one of the main agents of political violence.”<sup>29</sup>

One of the reasons behind the advent of the second generation of DDR was to “contribute to a secure environment and help build the foundation for longer-term peacebuilding.” But more than a decade after the adoption of the UN’s DDR standards and the advent of the second generation of DDR, there is still a strong sense in Africa that many

conflicts/crises on the continent will not be solved unless the international community changes how peacekeeping and DDR are done. To highlight only a few examples:

- i. In January 1999, in Sierra Leone, a failed peace and DDR process led to armed rebels from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) launching a brutal attack on Freetown, the capital city. By the time the peace operation regained control of the situation, more than 5,000 people had been killed.<sup>30</sup>
- ii. In the DRC, where more than 200,000 ex-combatants were disarmed and demobilized in the early 2010s, dozens of armed groups were still active in the eastern part of the country at the end of the decade, resulting in thousands of deaths annually over the period. More than two million people were newly displaced in 2017 and 2018 alone.<sup>31</sup>
- iii. The Central African Republic (CAR) has hosted more than 13 international or regional peace missions over the last 20 years,<sup>32</sup> and as many, if not more, DDR programs. Yet as of early 2019, over 80 percent of the country was controlled by armed groups.<sup>33</sup>
- iv. For many years, the UN peacekeeping mission in Côte d'Ivoire was highly supportive of DDR endeavors deployed by the government and much was accomplished. On June 28, 2017, the Secretary-General of the United Nations welcomed “the closure of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) [scheduled] on 30 June 2017, after having successfully achieved its mandate.”<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, three months later, supposedly disarmed ex-combatants launched a series of attacks or mutinies (for those reintegrated in the national armed forces) in Abidjan and other localities of Côte d'Ivoire, threatening to “set the country on fire,” claiming that the government had yet “to pay” the full amount of money promised to each combatant as a component of the DDR package.<sup>35</sup> This was the second time in six months that Ivorian ex-combatants had rebelled against state authority and wreaked havoc in their respective neighborhoods.

It is worth noting that in all of these cases, civilian populations in the affected communities were the first and main victims of the recurring waves of DDR-related violence.

## FROM COMBATANT-FOCUSED TO COMMUNITY-BASED DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION, AND REINTEGRATION

There is a major lesson that emerges from these and other DDR experiences<sup>36</sup>: the most effective way to guarantee the success and sustainability of DDR programs is to make sure that these programs serve not only ex-combatants, but also, and above all, all the populations and communities affected by violent conflict, including the most vulnerable among them. As such, as many African countries emerging from crisis continue to deal with the impact of armed violence on civilian populations, it has become common practice to assess the efficiency of a DDR project holistically: how well has it served the whole community that has been devastated by armed conflict? Fifteen years after the very first DDR programs were launched on the continent, *Africa Renewal*, a publication of the United Nations that focuses on African economic and social issues, recalled that this concern had become one of the most pressing challenges that DDR programs faced in the majority of the countries in which they were being implemented. In a special issue, released in October 2005, which undertook a comprehensive assessment of DDR implementation programs, a wide range of practitioners and academics spoke about their respective experiences with DDR. The majority of them deplored the fact that “because of their specific mandates [which focus on ex-combatants], most DDR programs concentrate on ex-combatants, and less on the communities to which they will return.” They recommended that these projects “should do more to help broader community recovery.”<sup>37</sup>

Five years earlier, in 2000, as the counterproductive effects of ex-combatant-focused DDR were being increasingly felt amidst countries and communities recovering from conflict, Victor Odame Asiedu published a PhD dissertation entitled “A Study of How Community-based Approach to Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) can Contribute More Effectively to Peacebuilding” in Africa.<sup>38</sup> His analysis highlighted the fact that “whilst the use of DDR continues to grow, it has been criticized for its focus on ex-combatants rather than communities.”<sup>39</sup> He concluded that a major consequence of such narrowly focused DDR is that it “sometimes creates divisions among community members and strains the entire peacebuilding process.”<sup>40</sup> Asiedu further observed that “in view of this limited approach to DDR, academics and practitioners alike are increasingly arguing for a community-based (CB) approach, especially during the reintegration

process, as a way of addressing resentment among community members, which impedes more effective peacebuilding.”<sup>41</sup> His analysis echoed the work of two experts from the Danish Institute for International Studies, who argued that DDR should “comprise communal development projects in order to diminish resentment from non-combatants in the ‘home communities.’”<sup>42</sup>

The initial DDR programs implemented in African countries emerging from armed conflict were exclusively intended for “those bearing arms.” These “weapons-users” were considered and treated as a distinctly specific group, different from the rest of the community. Consequently, instead of strengthening social cohesion after conflict, DDR programs became one of the most divisive factors in communities affected by armed conflict, re-fueling conditions that led to armed violence. The disruptive effects of DDR were both domestic and cross-border/regional.

On the domestic side, DDR packages offered to ex-combatants included, among other features, in-kind compensation, free vocational training, and resources for income-generating projects. In addition, each ex-combatant was provided with a significant amount of cash; for instance, in Liberia it was US \$300 per ex-combatant, and in Côte d’Ivoire, US \$1,000. In the post-war environment of acute scarcity and dire poverty, in which the vast majority of peoples live on less than half a dollar a day, these payments were relatively generous. In the eyes of those populations excluded from DDR programs because they neither carried guns nor killed people, such a comparatively large amount of money offered to ex-combatants was morally and economically unjust. They viewed ex-combatants as the privileged few who benefited from the tragedy of war. This situation generated widespread frustration and anger, further complicating the relationship between returning ex-combatants, the civilian population, and the international community that funded and implemented DDR programs. In some cases, international partners were accused of “rewarding violence.” The challenges raised here mirror those highlighted by Bigombe in her case studies of DDR in Uganda and Burundi in this volume.

On the regional side, combatant-focused DDR also had important regional and cross-border consequences. In countries where armed conflicts are recurrent, one of the grimmest effects of combatant-focused DDR was that every recurring wave of armed violence generated an increasing number of people, especially the young, taking up arms and

fighting, some with the hope of benefiting from post-crisis DDR packages. Hence, ironically, DDR became yet another incentive to violence, especially in those parts of Africa where armed conflicts easily spread across state borders. The cross-border impact of violence culminated in a phenomenon the United Nations calls “foreign combatants.” Their implications for DDR are significant.

“Foreign combatants” are nationals from a country crossing the border to participate in an armed conflict in another country, generally for political or economic reasons. In terms of the rules governing armed conflict, African “foreign combatants”—also called “negative forces” in the DRC—are a distinctive type of “soldiers of fortune” with a gray legal status between a “mercenary” and a “transnational criminal.” For instance, while many young Sierra Leoneans fought in the civil war in Liberia, there are also many young Liberians who were recruited by Sierra Leonean rebel groups to fight in Sierra Leone; likewise, nationals from Chad fought in the civil war in the CAR, while many Sudanese “foreign combatants” are found in both Chad and the CAR.<sup>43</sup> The situation in the DRC, where spoilers of one kind or another are pervasive in the eastern part of the country, illustrates how DDR can serve to incentivize the regionalization of both armed conflict and armed combatants. Many ex-combatants could easily cross state borders and fight multiple wars, thus benefiting from DDR packages from two to three countries as happened during the wars that raged in the West African Mano River Basin (Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d’Ivoire) between December 1989 and April 2011.

DDR experts and practitioners have learned from these experiences. Today’s DDR programs enable countries to foster community-based development, social cohesion, post-conflict reconciliation, and peace-building. According to the UN’s new Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS), such community-based DDR lays the groundwork “for safeguarding and sustaining the communities” in which ex-combatants “can live as law-abiding citizens, while building national capacity for long-term peace, security, and development.”<sup>44</sup>

Over the last decade, many governmental and non-governmental actors who committed to rebuilding peace in African countries recovering from armed conflicts have been consistently adjusting their DDR programs in the field with the objective of addressing the concerns and priorities of local communities. This is, for instance, the case for the

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its “Community-Focused Reintegration” (CFR) project,<sup>45</sup> which takes into consideration the need “to promote reintegration by creating a safe environment in which elements of divided communities could interact.” Likewise, Pax Christi, a Rome-based NGO helping communities affected by armed crises to respond to the challenging issue of transitional justice, has crafted a “Community Based Reintegration and Security” (CBRS) program that recommends that DDR efforts should “take root at local levels, which is essential to their legitimacy and sustainability.”

In order to disseminate knowledge and build the skills of practitioners in the area of community-based DDR, the United Nations, in synergy with other partners, has developed a specialized training course on “Community-Based Reintegration and Security (CBRS) for practitioners.” The course teaches “an innovative approach for more comprehensive context and community-driven reintegration, integration, resilience, and community security programming,” focusing in particular on “how community-based economic development can increase economic opportunities” for both ex-combatants and the larger community, thus “encouraging acceptance amidst those hosting communities” of ex-combatants.<sup>46</sup> The course also explores new ways to design more “gender responsive programming.”<sup>47</sup> In terms of information and experience sharing, the course offers the opportunity to bring together “experienced practitioners from around the world to learn about cutting-edge approaches and theories, to share experience, and develop their skills to effectively plan and deliver community-based reintegration and security programmes.”<sup>48</sup>

## DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION, AND REINTEGRATION IN AFRICA: THE ACHILLES HEEL, AND THE IRON RULES

### *The Achilles Heel: The Challenge of Incomplete Reintegration*

DDR is a hugely complex operation, especially in Africa’s conflict settings. One of the early lessons to emerge from the UN’s first comprehensive review of DDR on the continent is that “the disarmament, demobilization and in particular the reintegration processes extend beyond the life of a peacekeeping operation.”<sup>49</sup> Nearly 15 years after that assessment, it seems clearer still that whether a peacekeeping operation concludes its mandate successfully or not, DDR should continue regardless.

The good news is that thinking on DDR in the UN and other institutions is not static. It is, in fact, almost constantly under scrutiny, with considerable attention given to reforming its practice to align with rapidly evolving conflict dynamics in Africa. As the then-Secretary-General of the United Nations observed, “While the scale, complexity, scope and type of the United Nations work in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration have changed, our means of planning and implementing such operations have not.”<sup>50</sup>

The implementation of “Integrated DDR Standards” (IDDRS) in 2006 greatly improved cooperation and synergies among the various UN and non-UN actors in charge of the implementation of DDR. Nearly 15 years after the adoption of the IDDRS, the transformation of conflicts—especially in the CAR, the DRC, the Sahel, the Great Lakes region, and the Horn of Africa—continues to challenge our assumptions and hypotheses. The most recent reconceptualization by the UN on DDR puts new emphasis on violent extremism and threats posed by terrorism<sup>51</sup>; as well as what the Rift Valley Institute calls “the democratization of militarized politics” (the case of the eastern DRC and the Great Lakes region).<sup>52</sup>

A major qualitative improvement in DDR practice is how women and female ex-combatants are now central considerations, manifest in the “Standard Operating Procedures on Gender and DDR,” where once they were all but ignored.<sup>53</sup> In the same vein, the specific situation of ex-child combatants, notably, what the UN Secretary-General calls “the moral imperative to disarm children,” is also duly considered during the implementation of DDR programs.

The prospects for conflict and violence in Africa show that DDR will continue to be a key parameter for conflict resolution and peacemaking in the coming years. Many African countries—Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire amongst them—previously in widespread conflict face challenges from significant “remnants of war” comprising non-disarmed or inadequately demobilized ex-combatants. In these countries, like in the vast majority of Africa’s conflict-affected societies, the “R” (“Reintegration”) remains the Achilles heel of DDR programs. Although ex-combatants are most often fully disarmed and demobilized, those who are sustainably “reintegrated” are a minority.

There is, therefore, a need to boost the “reintegration” component of DDR with more resources, not only to address the concerns of ex-combatants, but also to enhance economic growth, create jobs,

and open more opportunities for business and entrepreneurship.<sup>54</sup> The funding trend is moving in the opposite direction, however. Budgets for many peace operations, especially for reintegration efforts, have been reduced. This is most notable for MONUSCO, one of the UN's longest and biggest missions.<sup>55</sup> One response to the conundrum of growing demand but dwindling resources would be to strengthen Africa's ownership of DDR programs, endowing regional institutions (African Union and regional economic communities) with adequate institutional capacities, expertise, and resources. This is a path that the African Union has been following, with its Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Capacity Program (DDRCP), initiated in 2012, which aims "to strengthen the capacities within the AU, its Member States and regional partners, to support national and regional DDR initiatives on the continent."<sup>56</sup>

The AU DDRCP program, which, if adequately handled, could become the best hope for the future of DDR in Africa, comprises three fundamental objectives:

- i. Institutionalize DDR capacities within the African Union;
- ii. establish an AU DDR Resource and Research Centre; and,
- iii. facilitate AU engagement and assistance to DDR activities of member states.<sup>57</sup>

The AU DDRCP is strongly supported by the AU's major partners, including, among others, the World Bank and the United Nations.<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In May of 2018, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres outlined the new context of global conflict, arguing that many populations continue to live "in dangerous times, protracted conflicts are causing unspeakable human suffering. Armed groups are proliferating, equipped with a vast array of weapons"; as these conflicts "grow more deadly, destructive and complex, we need a new focus on disarmament that saves lives."<sup>59</sup> The United Nations General Assembly, alarmed by this deteriorating situation, has thus requested the Secretary-General "to explore options for strengthening the United Nations–World Bank collaboration<sup>60</sup> in conflict-affected countries" and create "an enabling environment for economic growth,

foreign investment and job creation, and in the mobilization and effective use of domestic resources, in line with national priorities and underscored by the principle of national ownership.”<sup>61</sup> Relating specifically to DDR, such an initiative could be considered in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 16, whereby African and world leaders pledged “to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.” The African Union, which Guterres considers as the United Nations’ “most relevant partner in peace and security in the world”<sup>62</sup> should play a key role in this global partnership for sustainable DDR in those African countries and regions<sup>63</sup> recovering from or affected by the crisis of the proliferation of armed groups and weapons of war.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: THREE IRON RULES

The following policy recommendations are inspired by analyses and action-points relating to post-crisis recovery and sustainable peacebuilding contained in recent relevant reports, policy papers, and strategic frameworks from the African Union, the United Nations, the World Bank, and the African Development Bank.<sup>64</sup> The recommendations are crafted as practical action-points leading to more effective and sustainable forms of peacemaking and crisis recovery measures, including in particular, DDR.<sup>65</sup>

- 1. Secure adequate and timely funding for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration.** The need for adequate, timely, and predictable funding, especially for the “reintegration” component, remains the Achilles heel of DDR programs. There is, therefore, need to guarantee reliable, predictable, and sustainable sources of funding for the “reintegration” component to reduce the risk for countries recovering from crisis to relapse into violence.<sup>66</sup> The difficulties of securing funding for the reintegration of demobilized ex-combatants are partly explained by the fact that while the disarmament/demobilization of ex-combatants are accounted for in the assessed budget for peacekeeping operations, the reintegration of disarmed and demobilized combatants relies on voluntary funding. Unfortunately, experience shows only part of the funds pledged by donors is disbursed in an effective manner. Moreover, even when

pledges materialize, “In most cases there is a six- to eight-month gap from the time funds are pledged to the time they are available for use. The failure to follow through on promises made due to the lack of reliable funding could result in violence, re-recruitment of those already disarmed into local and regional conflicts, and a breakdown of the peace process.”<sup>67</sup>

2. *Address the paradox of successful peacekeeping operations followed by collapse in countries recovering from crisis.* There is need to bridge the gap between short-term emergency funding for peace and longer-term investment financing for economic and social development, including job-creation, income-generating activities, and business opportunities for youth and ex-combatants. Many countries where the United Nations has successfully completed a peacekeeping operation continue to be threatened by “remnants of war,” often poorly reintegrated ex-combatants. Since DDR extends “beyond the life of a peacekeeping operation,” it is critical for the viability of the peace and crisis recovery process to continue to strengthen relevant national capacities. DDR requires human and financial resources sufficient for a successful transition from emergency peacekeeping and humanitarian action to financing economic and social development activities that create jobs and provide real alternatives to war for ex-combatants and youth. Among others, the United Nations’ Peacebuilding Fund, which was established precisely to “assist countries in their transition from war to peace” and prevent state collapse and the slide to armed conflict,<sup>68</sup> should be endowed with adequate resources to assist countries “in the transition from the immediate post-conflict phase to longer-term reconstruction and development.”<sup>69</sup>

3. *Frame and develop a regional response to the challenges of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration in Africa.* The African Union, within the framework of its “Silencing the Guns in Africa”<sup>70</sup> initiative, should work in partnership with the UN, the World Bank,<sup>71</sup> the African Development Bank, and any other relevant stakeholders, to frame a regional response to the challenge of DDR in African post-conflict countries, focusing on peacebuilding and Sustainable Development Goal 16.<sup>72</sup> Though the global impact of armed conflict has lessened, available data show that “more countries have recently experienced violent conflict than at any time in nearly three decades.”<sup>73</sup> Many of the ongoing conflicts are in Africa,

which hosts 40 percent of all United Nations peacekeeping operations in the world. “With a decline in civil wars ending in military victory,” Sebastian von Eisendel cautions, “the conflict relapse rate has increased” on the continent.<sup>74</sup>

## NOTES

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7. Jairo Munive and Finn Stepputat, “Rethinking Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs,” *International Journal of Security & Development, Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 1–13, 48, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.go/>.
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  12. The very first major DDR program was carried out in the context of the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA), authorized by the Security Council in 1989: see Rainer Grote, "The United Nations and the Establishment of a New Model of Governance for Central America: the Case of Guatemala," in *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law Volume 2*, Armin von Bogdandy and Rüdiger Wolfrum (eds.) (Max Planck Institute, 1998).
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## CHAPTER 10

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# The Changing Nature of Elections in Africa: Impact on Peacebuilding

*Franklin Oduro*

## INTRODUCTION

Elections remain central to the development of democratic and inclusive societies in Africa. Not only do elections provide means to economic growth and development since citizens can elect leaders based on their campaign promises and policies on socio-economic development, regular elections also contribute to peacebuilding by conferring authority on leaders, facilitating peaceful transfers of power, and promoting citizens' participation and inclusion in governance. Indeed, regular and credible elections have been recognized by various global, regional, sub-regional, and national entities and infrastructures as critical for sustainable peacebuilding. In Africa, through the African Union (AU) Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and the African Governance Architecture (AGA), among others, member countries have been provided guidelines

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to ensure that the conduct of elections promotes good governance, and ensures peace and stability.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the general recognition of the centrality of elections to sustainable peacebuilding efforts, many elections have resulted in less peace and more destabilization. The continent has recorded several cases of pre- and post-election violence that have threatened stability in some countries, and generated prolonged civil wars, conflict, and violence in others such as Ethiopia (2005), Togo (2005), Kenya (2007 and 2017), Zimbabwe (2008), and Nigeria (2007 and 2011),<sup>2</sup> to cite only a few examples. Even in countries, such as Ghana, Zambia, and Senegal where peaceful election outcomes have been recorded, the (flawed) conduct of elections has stoked fears of instability and violence, which could flare up at any time. Except for a few countries characterized by single party and/or candidate dominance, such as Rwanda, there remain uncertainties about how sustainable “peaceful outcomes of elections” are in many African countries.

This chapter provides an overview of elections and their contributions to peacebuilding in Africa. The argument is made that while elections should be viewed as a central part of peacebuilding, their impact is dependent on the regularity, inclusiveness, integrity, and credibility of election processes and outcomes. Drawing on key lessons and international best practices, this chapter highlights challenges and emerging threats to the conduct of peaceful elections in Africa. They include the increasing cost of financing elections, abuse of presidential term limits, and the increasing use of technology in the administration of elections. The final section provides four recommendations for addressing the key drivers of election-related violence and instability. These recommendations, informed by three decades of election experiences in Africa, are advanced in order that elections may contribute positively to peace on the continent.

## ELECTIONS AND PEACEBUILDING

The role of elections in peacebuilding is recognized globally. Rather than viewing them as ends in themselves, they are viewed as one (important) tool in broader efforts to promote peace and stability. Elections are part of democratic political transitions and are critical during the implementation of peace agreements. As argued by Matanock, “Post-conflict elections can greatly enhance the durability of peace agreements...specifically, [peace] agreements that enable rebel and government parties to

participate in elections.”<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, international assistance for peacebuilding programs, including deployments by the United Nations (UN) and its affiliated agencies, invariably have an election component. This is particularly true of post-conflict and/or transitional settings, which are common in Africa.<sup>4</sup>

Post-conflict or transitional elections create the opportunity for all stakeholders to contribute to building legal and constitutional frameworks, as well as democratic institutions that advance a sustainable peacebuilding agenda. In addition, because election periods provide a path—for many citizens, the only path—to political participation, they create the feeling of belonging, thereby fostering inclusion and unity which, in turn, promotes peace. In other words, the electoral imperative, the opportunity for citizens to periodically participate in leadership change through a credible and competitive process, offers the promise of peace and stability in societies.<sup>5</sup> Fundamentally, the link between elections and peacebuilding is premised on the belief that regular and credible elections offer the most promising instrument for addressing and managing societal tensions and conflict without the use of violence.<sup>6</sup>

### THREE DECADES OF ELECTIONS IN AFRICA: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THEIR IMPACT ON PEACEBUILDING?

Whereas the nexus between elections and peacebuilding is widely understood in its positive manifestations—e.g., allowing citizens to choose their political leaders freely and, thus, allocate power peacefully—there is also clear evidence to suggest that elections have often triggered violence and undermined peacebuilding on the continent. Mostly, this is due to the way elections are conducted. A poorly conducted election can ignite the underlying tensions in societies, already amplified by the very high-stakes—e.g., “winner-takes-all”—associated with electoral competition in Africa. Studies on electoral violence in Sub-Saharan Africa highlight a number of factors and threats to electoral peace.<sup>7</sup> For example, Straus and Taylor, examining data from 1990 to 2007, suggest a typology of election violence that ranges from low intensity to violent harassment and large-scale violence, which results in death and instability.<sup>8</sup>

Election-related violence on the African continent has been variously influenced by:

- i. Intense competition—“winner-takes-all” mentality—among political elites for state power and resources<sup>9</sup>;
- ii. weak election management bodies (EMBs);
- iii. flawed electoral registers; and
- iv. a lack of transparency and/or inadequate pre-election preparations.

These and other factors<sup>10</sup> contribute greatly toward a deficit in trust in elections among citizens and electoral opponents.

The story is not all negative, however. Regular elections have increasingly become the norm in Africa. Acceptance by citizens<sup>11</sup> and political elites that the ballot box is the only legitimate means for electing leaders is now widespread. This is a far cry from the past when leaders ruled through the barrel of a gun in many parts of Africa. Not anymore. The compliance of ACDEG protocols regarding regularity of elections in member countries is growing. A recent study assessing compliance of six AU-member countries (Ghana, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia, and Nigeria) on regular elections confirmed as much, although capacity to conduct elections varied across the studied countries.<sup>12</sup> While regularity of elections is improving, their quality remains a serious concern. Even with this concern, the fact that political elites and citizens prefer elections, rather than other methods, for choosing leaders and allocating power is beneficial to peacebuilding efforts in Africa.

Gradually, election management bodies are getting better and becoming more professionalized. This has helped to drive even more demand for transparency in election preparations and management. The application of technology is also helping EMBs to address other concerns and build societal trust in electoral processes. EMBs in Africa have been the test-bed for biometric technology in registering potential voters. Where it has been introduced effectively, it has improved the integrity of voter registers and enhanced transparency in the collation and declaration of results. All of this has helped to make elections in some countries more credible and thus minimize their potential for triggering violence and instability.

As a result of the improvement in election administration and increasing professionalism of EMBs, the continent is also experiencing increasing (even if sometimes difficult) acceptance of election results by losing candidates, and thereby effecting peaceful election outcomes.<sup>13</sup> The accompanying leadership transitions recorded in Benin, Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia are significant success stories

that are contributing to reducing tensions surrounding the conduct of elections.

Finally, the contributions of elections to peacebuilding processes in Africa cannot be discussed without acknowledging the role of election monitors and observers, both domestic and international. Despite some limitations, the short- and long-term observation activities of election observers, are contributing to and supporting peaceful election outcomes. The AU's electoral assistance division within the department of political affairs has played a critical role and continues to provide critical support and observation missions (both long-term and short-term) to African countries in compliance with ACDEG. The AU's presence and role in elections in Nigeria (2015 and 2019), Ghana (2016), Kenya (2017), Liberia (2017), and Sierra Leone (2018) are clear cases for reference, where their role in promoting peace before, during, and after elections was critical. As Lappin argues, while admitting limitations, "...international election observation missions (IEOMs) remain essential elements to peacebuilding..."<sup>14</sup> Those limitations were most starkly evident during the 2019 elections in Malawi, where the African Union Election Observation Mission reported that "...the elections took place in a peaceful, transparent and orderly manner, and thus met national, regional, continental and international standards for democratic elections..."<sup>15</sup> For their part, the European Union's Election Observation Mission, which covered 27 of the 28 voting districts of Malawi in its preliminary report, concluded that despite an unlevel playing field, the election was "Well-managed, inclusive, transparent and competitive."<sup>16</sup> However, Malawi's own Constitutional Court concluded in 2020 that this assessment was flawed, thus confirming allegations of widespread irregularities. It ordered new elections, which resulted in the defeat of the winner of the annulled 2019 vote.<sup>17</sup>

Both positive and negative voting experiences have served to heighten Africa's focus on developing best practices and institutional reforms to ensure elections that better serve the interests of peace. Among many lessons learned, two stand out: first, the negative consequences of the persistent "winner-takes-all" mentality; and second, that the timing and sequencing of elections are crucial, particularly in transitional periods.

### *Winner-Takes-All Politics*

The “winner-takes-all” nature of African politics can be especially insidious come election time, owing to the high stakes involved. The desire of African political elites to capture state power, and by extension state resources for themselves and their cronies, has fueled the quest to secure election victory at any cost. As Atta-Asamoah notes, “Such [winner-takes-all] politics, if left unchecked in the context of the complex cocktail of development and security challenges in Africa, could derail the sustainability of democratic gains, development strides, and the maintenance of peace and security in many fragile states.”<sup>18</sup>

To curtail this trend, reforms should be made to key governance institutions—such as the legislature as a countervailing force to the executive branch of government; constitutions to foster broad-based inclusive politics—and to electoral systems (e.g., move away from “first past the post” and toward “proportional representation” and “mixed plurality”).<sup>19</sup> With particular reference to electoral systems, and as argued elsewhere with respect to the Southern African Development Cooperation (SADC) region, Khabele Matlosa, for example, recommends that “SADC states must make deliberate efforts to address election-related conflicts and war by, among other things, reforming their electoral systems.”<sup>20</sup> Observations seem to suggest that the “first past the post” systems tends to amplify the “winner-takes-all” approach. This, in turn, raises the potential for election-related violence.

### *Sequencing and Timing*

A badly timed election can, sometimes, be worse than having no election at all. Promoters of democracy and good governance, whether foreign or local, tend to push for elections at the first opportunity during transitional settings. This is not always good for building sustainable peace.<sup>21</sup> Where peace is still fragile and trust is lacking, EMBs are usually poorly resourced; basic legal and institutional reforms have not been implemented; new and opposition political parties have not been given sufficient time to prepare; and elections are often hurriedly organized. All of these factors can impede democratic progress.

As Fath-Lihic and Brancati argue, the ability of national and international policy actors to understand and assess the complex political, legal, technical, operational, participatory, and security-related challenges

in determining the ideal timing for the conduct of transitional elections is critical for peacebuilding processes. A “one-size-fits-all” election solution, they add, does not exist. Every transition is different. Much depends on historical context, the nature of the conflict, and what the elections are designed to achieve, which is not always as straightforward as it seems.<sup>22</sup>

“Elections are often the final stage of a peace process, if not the ultimate objective,” observe McNamee et al. “The hope is that elections can have a stabilizing effect on a fractured society. Done well and timely, they can. But conducted too early, before security problems have been converted into political problems, they can have the opposite effect: exacerbate divisions and foment violence.”<sup>23</sup> Fostering local ownership and inclusivity, building trust and promoting broad-based popular support for electoral processes are vital. The benefits to peace of encouraging a national tone of mutual respect and tolerance during the electoral phases (pre, during, and post) are also not to be underestimated.

## CHALLENGES AND EMERGING THREATS TO ELECTION PEACE IN AFRICA

In addition to the failings highlighted above, elections during the past decade have revealed new and emerging problems which can serve to undermine peace and stability. These emerging issues, including failures in the (increasing) application of technology during elections, mounting legal challenges to election results by contenders, incumbents ignoring term limits, and the rising cost of elections, merit closer scrutiny.

### *Technology and Elections*

In some cases, the use of biometric technology by EMBs in the registration and authentication of voters has helped to counter voter fraud and enhance the credibility of electoral registers. Recently, EMBs have also been scaling up efforts—notably in Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria—to use information technology to increase transparency in election results transmission.<sup>24</sup> In other instances, however, the introduction of new technologies has led to myriad problems, with negative consequences for stability and peace. Questions about the procurement and management of the equipment, equipment breakdowns, unreliable devices, and the suspect integrity and poor handling of these devices by election officials

have been common.<sup>25</sup> Failures in the collation and transmission of election results in Kenya resulted in a period of grave uncertainty, as the “defeated” opposition successfully disputed the results of the election, then withdrew from the subsequent re-scheduled vote. Many feared that the political turmoil sparked by the 2017 election saga would trigger a repeat of the 2007/2008 election violence. Fortunately, this did not happen.

All the evidence suggests that, despite these and other problems such as weak transparency and inclusion in procurement practices, Africa’s EMBs are pushing for more information technology in election management. But that push, in itself, can be detrimental to situations where elections become a tool for promoting peacebuilding. Recent electoral processes and outcomes have exposed weaknesses in the methods and conduct of election observers. Their ability, for example, in the era of tech-driven elections to detect potential manipulation at results collation centers seems limited. As Judd Devermont points out, “Most observers do not have the technological expertise to counter... [and] circumvent government internet controls, safeguard election results from hacking, or detect digital tampering.”<sup>26</sup> Hacking and other digital attacks can effectively undermine many of the key ingredients of election integrity: voter registration, vote casting, and vote tabulation. As many analysts have also observed, the timing and context in which election-related information, communication, and technology are introduced often do not allow for adequate time for familiarization by opposition parties.<sup>27</sup> The risks of politicization become high at a very early stage, meaning that many election results have already been effectively rejected by the opposition well before the election itself is actually held.

### *Litigating Election Results*

Recent elections in Nigeria (2011 and 2019), Ghana (2012 and 2016), Kenya (2017), Liberia (2017), Sierra Leone (2018) and Malawi (2019)<sup>28</sup> gave rise to new dynamics in election dispute management and potential threats to stability. The resort to judicial processes to contest election results in these cases is, obviously, a progressive step forward from the extra-judicial means used in the past to contest and change electoral outcomes. That said, this trend presents its own challenges to peacebuilding.

When the judiciary is put at the center of *deciding* election outcomes, it also ends up *pronouncing* on them. Though the difference in language is subtle, the implications can be significant. Judicial pronouncements on election outcomes will be based on interpretations of the law, technicalities, procedures, and legal principles which may contradict vote tallies. Citizens who feel that their votes have been overturned by seemingly abstract judicial rulings may be more susceptible to joining violent forms of resistance and mass mobilization. They may even be given succor by alternative swearing-in ceremonies (as recently witnessed in Kenya) where the opposition candidate claims “victor status” despite official results not going his or her way.<sup>29</sup> Civic education in Africa has not sensitized people to the idea that one’s chosen candidate can “win” the election at the ballot box but lose it in court.

The length of judicial litigations on election outcome disputes could also serve as potential triggers for election violence. The decision by the Kenyan Supreme Court after the 2017 election is a case in point. The relative speed (within a month) with which the court concluded on the petition brought before it by the opposition parties raised concerns that the court did not spend adequate time examining the case and competing arguments before deciding to annul the election results. In Ghana, the opposite occurred: the post-2012 election petition to the Supreme Court on the results of the presidential election took too long. The eight-month delay created a wellspring of anxiety across society, which could have boiled-over in a country where the declared winner was in office but not yet confirmed as legitimate.

On the face of it, there is nothing wrong with the judiciary playing a greater role in ensuring elections are sound. The Malawi Constitutional Court’s decision to order a re-run of the 2019 election has generally been viewed as a boost for Malawi’s journey toward democracy. But as more disgruntled politicians and parties try to exploit potential loopholes in electoral laws in African countries, weak election administration infrastructures are exposed. Judiciaries cannot be expected to fill this gap—balancing interpretations of rules and technicalities and legal principles against the will of the people, however that might be determined. A recent study illustrated some of the dangers: in the case of Nigeria, it argues that its judiciary has been complicit in perpetrating electoral fraud in Nigerian elections.<sup>30</sup> The authors conclude that, while the Nigerian political class sees the judiciary as another platform for resolving election disputes, the manipulation of the judiciary and its associated process to

perpetrate electoral fraud has resulted in a high level of public mistrust of the judiciary.<sup>31</sup> Resolving this electoral conundrum will be critical to the future of peacebuilding in Africa.

### *Abusing Presidential Term Limits*

Another emerging threat to election peace relates to attempts by ruling elites to extend their stay in office through removal of constitutional term limits, mostly against the wishes of their populations.<sup>32</sup> In the post-Cold War era, approximately 30 African leaders have attempted to change constitutional impositions to extend their rule—in perpetuity, in some cases—and almost half of these attempts have succeeded.<sup>33</sup> The idea of “third termism” can sometimes be described as lawful, due to the constitutional procedures adopted to legitimize the changes in the law, but the popular opposition to such moves stores up considerable potential for violence and instability. Moreover, attempts by African political leaders to extend their stay in power typically precludes opportunities for multi-party electoral engagements.

The absurd corollary of the “president for life” trend—that opposition parties aren’t allowed to compete for office—foments myriad extra-legal/judicial means of seeking power. As Taylor et al. argue, election-related violence is more likely in situations where incumbents have unfettered right to contest elections; conversely, where incumbents don’t run, violence becomes less likely.<sup>34</sup>

### *Increasing Cost of Financing Elections and Elective Politics*

The increasing cost of financing African elections is another potential threat to peacebuilding.<sup>35</sup> Due to limited resources, African countries have turned more and more to donor partners, especially Western partners, to fund their elections. This trend raises stark questions about resilience and sustainability: what happens if traditional funding streams suddenly dry up? Will governments be more inclined to suspend or delay elections, or indeed not have them at all? And what will be the consequent impacts on peace and stability? Through logistics and (putative) funding-related delays in holding scheduled elections over more than two years, from 2016–2018, the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)<sup>36</sup> was perhaps lucky to have escaped with only minor eruptions of violence by discontented Congolese.

It is not just the cost of the elections themselves that is problematic; campaign financing can also seed security problems. The increasing cost of electoral campaigns makes it difficult for opposition parties to compete on a level playing field. Ruling parties and candidates often raid state coffers to fund their campaigns; opposition parties might not be able to secure private funding, owing to fears of the private sector, especially companies, that opportunities for business with the state will be closed if they are found to be funding the opposition. Significantly, electoral politics in much of Africa has become the sole preserve of the rich. A study in Ghana revealed that around US \$86,000 was spent on average by members of parliament in their election campaigns.<sup>37</sup> This is completely out of reach for the vast majority of Africans, adding to concerns of inclusivity. If money alienates ordinary Africans from electoral politics, this is bad for peacebuilding in the long-term.

Africa needs to take a hard look at its electoral systems and decide whether to encourage peace or promote division. The “winner-takes-all” politics common across Africa are a significant trigger of election-related conflict.<sup>38</sup> Any system that encourages political exclusion, Gyampoh argues, “can, potentially, jeopardize the fragile election peace.”<sup>39</sup> Alternatives such as proportional representation have their own shortcomings, but to the extent that proportional representation lessens the marginalization of losers and spreads the benefits of victory more widely, it can reduce the likelihood of elections undermining peace and peacebuilding.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening the integrity and quality of electoral processes in Africa will contribute positively to peacebuilding. This requires a multifaceted response on the part of local, national, and international stakeholders, including organizations specializing in elections and democratic assistance and consolidation. As part of this holistic response, four specific policy recommendations are offered below.

### *1. Re-examine electoral laws in African Union-member countries.*

There is a need to re-examine electoral laws in order to ensure that these laws are in compliance with provisions in the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). The recurring challenge in deepening democratic governance in Africa

has, generally, been the failure of African Union member countries to domesticate various protocols and charters to which they are signatories. After three decades of operating transitional electoral laws, there has yet to be an adequate sifting of the policies and protocols which have worked from those that have not. The reforms should address electoral processes as well as rules and legislation that promote a level playing field, reducing the unfair advantage held by incumbents. Such a review must take into account gaps and non-compliance that result in electoral disputes and litigations, as well as a lack of transparency and inclusiveness. Given the regularity of elections and their changing dynamics, Africa needs new or updated mechanisms to address election-related threats to peace and stability. Pro-democracy organizations working to strengthen election management bodies should be at the forefront in engaging with these growing threats.

2. *Confront the challenges related to the growing use of technology in the administration of elections.* There is a critical need to stimulate global and continental discussions on emerging challenges to election observers' work in an era of technologically driven election administration. Independent and non-partisan citizen election observation groups, who are already incorporating information technology in their observation as well as international election observer missions, must begin to find ways of including verification protocols in electronic transmittal and collation of election results in their observation programs. With increasing sophistication in election administration, election observer groups must also align their protocols to the emerging threats to election peace. "...like modern-day police chasing cyber-thieves instead of masked bank robbers, international observers must adapt to new technologies."<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, it may be prudent to review the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations, and Code of Conduct for Non-Partisan Citizen Election Observers and Monitors to take into account protocols for addressing gaps in the more obscure aspects of election technology processes, i.e., the back-end. By addressing this gap, the reports of election observer groups will be more reliable and better received by host countries. Creating spaces for observer groups to engage election management bodies in this area of election administration is critical for enhanced transparency, trust-building, and inclusiveness.

3. *Assure sustainable financing of elections.* Stakeholders, especially international democracy promoters, must engage on the issues of financing. In order to forestall opportunities for leaders to use a lack of resources as an excuse to suspend elections, it is imperative to develop ways for instituting sustainable financing of elections. Such mechanisms could include the establishment of national election funds designed in a manner that the ruling government does not have a say in its management. The policy response should also include instituting predictable national and international sources of funding, and accountable mechanisms to ensure transparent and judicious use of resources for election administration. In this instance, groups such as the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa, the African Union Department of Political Affairs, and other global democracy promoters must lead in advocating for such a fund. Exploring ways to address sustainable financing of elections must be accompanied by campaign finance reform to create a more level playing field, and to assure inclusiveness and integrity of elections.
4. *Counter the trend to eliminate presidential term limits.* A continental and sub-regional response is required to address the trend toward serving beyond constitutionally mandated presidential term limits. This will require sustained, long-term advocacy from all corners, but perhaps especially the African Union and the regional economic communities. For instance, the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) was close to instituting such a protocol for its members but failed when two members, Togo and The Gambia, objected to the decision.<sup>41</sup> With the exit of president Yahya Jammeh in The Gambia and the reforms that have occurred in Togo, there is a window of opportunity for civil society actors to begin a campaign for ECOWAS to revisit the subject.

## NOTES

1. The African Charter for Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), adopted in 2007, articulates the universal values of democracy and respect for human rights that are founded on supremacy of the constitution and the holding of democratic and credible elections.
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5. Adelaja Odukoya, “Democracy, Elections, Election Monitoring and Peace-Building in West Africa,” *African Journal of International Affairs* 10, no. 1–2 (2007): 147–160.
6. Richard Lappin, “Why Observe Elections? Reassessing the Importance of Credible Elections to Post-conflict Peacebuilding,” *Peace Research: Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 41, no. 2 (2009): 86–117.
7. Dorina Bekoe, “Africa’s Electoral Landscape: Concerning Signals, Reassuring Trends,” *African Center for Strategic Studies*, May 16, 2016, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/sub-saharan-africas-electoral-landscape-concerning-signals-reassuring-trends/>.
8. Scott Straus and Charlie Taylor, “Democratization and Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990–2008,” in *Voting in Fear: Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2012).
9. For detailed discussions on the implications of “winner-takes-all” phenomenon on inclusive governance and peacebuilding, see Ransford Gyampoh, “Winner-Takes-All Politics in Ghana: The Case for Effective Council of State,” *Journal of Politics and Governance* 4, no. 1–4 (December 2015): 17–24; and Andrews Atta-Asamoah, “Winner-Takes-All Politics and Africa’s Future,” *Institute for Security Studies*, <https://iss-africa.org/amp/iss-today/winner-takes-all-politics-and-africas-future>.
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11. Interviews conducted by the Afrobarometer Research Network between 2016 and 2018 reported that 75 percent of Africans (across 34 countries) preferred to use regular, open, and honest elections to choose country leaders. See “Africans Want High-Quality Elections—Especially If They Bring Change, Afrobarometer Surveys Show,” *Afrobarometer*, June 26, 2019, [https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/pressrelease//ab\\_r7\\_pr\\_africans\\_want\\_high\\_quality\\_elections\\_especially\\_if\\_theyBring\\_change.pdf](https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/pressrelease//ab_r7_pr_africans_want_high_quality_elections_especially_if_theyBring_change.pdf).
12. Anne McLennan, “Democratic Governance,” in *Civil Society Perspectives on African Union Member States Commitments to Democratic Governance* (Johannesburg: Wits School of Governance, University of Witwatersrand, 2017).

13. Judd Devermont notes that since 2015, 13 opposition parties have won elections and defeated incumbent parties, which is contrary to experiences in the past two decades. See Judd Devermont, *The Game Has Changed: Rethinking the U.S. Role in Supporting Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2019).
14. Lappin, "Why Observe Elections?" 87.
15. See [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38117-doc-report\\_of\\_the\\_african\\_union\\_election\\_observation\\_mission\\_to\\_the\\_21\\_may\\_2019\\_t\\_ripartite\\_elections\\_in\\_the\\_republic\\_of\\_malawi.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38117-doc-report_of_the_african_union_election_observation_mission_to_the_21_may_2019_t_ripartite_elections_in_the_republic_of_malawi.pdf), 9.
16. See [https://eeas.europa.eu/election-observation-missions/eom-malawi-2019\\_en/63055/EU%20EOM%20Malawi%20presents%20its%20Preliminary%20Statement](https://eeas.europa.eu/election-observation-missions/eom-malawi-2019_en/63055/EU%20EOM%20Malawi%20presents%20its%20Preliminary%20Statement).
17. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/27/opposition-wins-rerun-of-malawis-presidential-election-in-historic-first>.
18. Atta-Asamoah, "Winner-Takes-All Politics and Africa's Future."
19. Gyampoh, "Winner-Takes-All Politics in Ghana," 17–24; Ransford Edward Van Gyampoh, "Dealing with Ghana's Winner-Takes-All Politics: The Case of an Independent Parliament," *African Review* 42, no. 2 (2015): 63–75; Ransford Edward Van Gyampoh, "Dealing with Ghana's Winner-Takes-All Politics: A Case for Proportional Representation?" *The Journal of Social Sciences Research* 1, no. 4 (2015): 41–46; Nic Cheeseman, Karuti Kanyinga, Gabrielle Lynch, Mutuma Ruteere, and Justin Willis, "Kenya's 2017 Elections: Winner-Takes-All Politics as Usual?" *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 13, no. 2 (2019): 215–234; Khabele Matlosa, "Review of Electoral Systems and Democratisation in Southern Africa" (Paper, International Roundtable on the South African Electoral System, Cape Town, South Africa, September 9–10, 2002); and David Thomas, "End 'Winner Takes All' Politics—Osinbajo," *New African*, April 21, 2015, <https://newafricanmagazine.com/10741/>.
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  26. Devermont, *The Game has Changed*, 6.
  27. McNamee, Hamukoma, and Mwanawasa, *Elections in Africa*, 9–12.
  28. Recent elections conducted in these countries witnessed judicial litigations in various forms in the pre-election and post-election phases, including litigation on results collation, transmission and declaration.
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38. Gyampoh, “Dealing with Ghana’s Winner-Takes-All Politics: A Case for Proportional Representation?”
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## CHAPTER 11

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# Contributions of Early Warning to the African Peace and Security Architecture: The Experience of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)

*Chukwuemeka B. Eze and Osei Baffour Frimpong*

## INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, the peace and security environment of Africa has been notably fragile. Throughout this 30-year period, the continent has been burdened with myriad security threats. At its outset, states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Rwanda, and Burundi, to name only a few, descended into brutal intra-state conflict. While these countries have emerged out of these conflicts and embarked—however slowly or erratically—on a democratic path, the nature of threats to security has oscillated from large-scale intra-state

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conflicts to insurgencies by armed groups and transnational organized syndicates, including human and drug trafficking and the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). Equally alarming is the convergence of terrorist and violent extremist groups into a new hybrid threat that recognizes no borders. They continue to exploit weaknesses and vulnerabilities of fragile states and conflict zones to unleash violence against civilian populations, and seize and control territories to challenge the legitimacy of the state. The consequences of these conflicts are evident in a cocktail of humanitarian crises that continue to exacerbate the fragility of states and human security on the continent.

The African Union (AU) established the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) to address a multitude of existing and emerging security challenges facing the continent. Essentially, the APSA is premised on preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts in Africa through the African Union's established institutions—the Peace and Security Council, African Standby Force, Panel of the Wise, African Peace Fund, and Continental Early Warning System.

Given the weaknesses in conflict early response mechanisms in states, which have partly contributed to the continent's susceptibility to conflicts, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) of the APSA was designed to enhance anticipation, preparedness, and early response to conflicts across Africa.<sup>1</sup> Civil society organizations (CSOs) are recognized as strategic partners in bolstering the operationalization of the continental early warning systems at the regional and continental levels by providing early warning analysis and sharing information relevant to the mitigation of potential threats to peace and security.

It is against this background that the West Africa Network for Peace-building (WANEP), through its strategic partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the AU since 2002 and 2015, respectively, has been a key partner in developing and operationalizing conflict early warning systems to support peace and security at the national, regional, and continental levels.<sup>2</sup> Through the partnership, WANEP has contributed to the operationalization of ECOWARN, the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (WARN) which covers all ECOWAS member states. The WARN works to enhance human security in West Africa by monitoring and reporting socio-political situations that could degenerate into violent and destructive conflicts, and to inform policymakers on options for response. Over the years, the program has developed National Early Warning Systems (NEWS) in all

of its national networks in West Africa to help strengthen ECOWARN by providing more robust grassroots engagement and information into the systems. Given WANEP's years of partnership with ECOWAS and the AU in the area of conflict early warning and peacebuilding interventions in bolstering APSA, it is pertinent to bring such experiences into the body of literature on peace and security in Africa. Importantly, there are lessons to be drawn from the experiences of WANEP for Regional Economic Communities (RECs) across the continent.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the post-Cold War security context of Africa, highlighting the existing and emerging threats. The second section highlights the APSA, with particular emphasis on the early warning mechanisms and their utility in enhancing peace and security in Africa. The third section assesses WANEP's experiences in the area of conflict early warning and its contribution to the APSA. As a corollary to this, the lessons learned from WANEP's experience are examined with the view of promoting robust CSO partnerships with RECs. The final section argues that in order for the APSA to realize the value of early warning in peacebuilding, states, RECs, and the AU must strengthen and sustain APSA's partnership with civil society organizations as key agents in developing and operationalizing conflict early warning interventions.

## OVERVIEW OF THE POST-COLD WAR SECURITY CONTEXT OF AFRICA

The security challenges facing Africa in the post-Cold War era are a combination of old and new issues. Although there has been a considerable decline in the number of armed conflicts, the underlying issues that gave rise to a host of violent intra-state conflicts in the late 1980s and the 1990s continue to prevail in parts of the continent.<sup>3</sup> The challenges of exclusion, marginalization, inequality, and the weakening of the state through corruption, nepotism, patrimonialism, and clientelism remain key drivers of insecurity in Africa.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, some contemporary threats are actually old issues under new labels. The end of the Cold War unleashed a number of factors that have underpinned insecurity on the continent. Prominent among them was a shift in superpower interests, which resulted in changes in policies that had promoted and preserved repression, exclusion, and dictatorships in several developing countries.<sup>5</sup> This rendered erstwhile military dictators susceptible to internal contestations over their legitimacy.<sup>6</sup> Greater external support for democracy

promotion, easy access to SALW, as well as enhanced interconnectedness between individuals and communities facilitated by globalization, provided the impetus for discontented groups to organize themselves and demand change through various means, including the use of force.<sup>7</sup>

These factors unleashed an unprecedented surge in intra-state armed conflicts in the region. In addition to old threats, many new threats have been occasioned by advancements in technology, increased mobility of persons, proliferation and movements of arms, religious and ethnic militancy, as well as global climate change. The spread of violent extremism and transnational organized criminal networks has become acute, especially in the Sahel, East Africa, and West Africa. In Nigeria, a previously latent Islamic fundamentalist group, Boko Haram, has exploited the challenges of weak state capacity to gain notoriety as one of the most violent extremist groups in the world. Boko Haram and its faction, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), pose a grave threat to human security and stability in that region. Since Mali's independence in 1960, a series of armed insurgencies have been launched by Tuaregs—a politically and economically marginalized group—in the northern part of the country. As an ethnic group with a pastoralist lifestyle who are found in the Saharan parts of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Algeria, and Libya, the Tuaregs have been able to mobilize such affinal relations to confront the central government in Bamako in their bid to establish a separate state.<sup>8</sup> Since 2012, Tuareg secessionists have been joined by extremists claiming to wage jihad for the creation of an Islamic state in northern Mali, where arms, drugs, hostage-taking, and human trafficking have become a source income for criminal networks.<sup>9</sup>

The fall of Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, in 2011 led to a constellation of challenges that have added to the insecurity and instability in Mali and the Sahel, in general. It has provided the impetus for a host of armed groups, mercenaries, terrorist, and violent extremist groups including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Ansar Dine, Ansaru, and Al Mourabitoun, further compounding insecurity in the Sahel. The spillover effect of security fragility in northern Mali is manifesting in extremist and armed attacks in neighboring Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso.<sup>10</sup>

Porous borders have also facilitated smuggling of SALW, human and narcotics trafficking, and illegal immigration on an unprecedented scale. The influx of SALW, in particular, has been fueling ever-more

violent actions by local armed groups, mercenaries, and bandits, causing enormous human security challenges.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, election-related violence has increasingly become a prominent threat to stability in most of Africa's nascent democracies. While elections are a key driver of democracy and good governance, the exigencies of power contestations coupled with electoral irregularities, continue to ignite animosities, tensions, and violence across Africa.

Farmer-herder conflict is another threat to peace and security in the West African sub-region. Though the phenomenon is not new in the security environment, it remains protracted, often unleashing tensions and violence between pastoralists and farmers in communities. Farming and herding activities are complementary and, together, they have constituted the basis of the economy of most states in the region for many centuries.<sup>12</sup>

Yet climate change has led to droughts, floods, and warming that has contributed to a significant reduction in resources such as water, land, and food, which support livelihoods in communities. This, in turn, has led to increased competition that often triggers ethnic and intercommunity violence.<sup>13</sup>

## THE AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE: EARLY WARNING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

Owing to its realization of the importance of proactive measures to confront Africa's diverse security challenges, the AU, in Article 12 of its Peace and Security protocol, provided for the establishment of a Conflict Early Warning (CEWS).<sup>14</sup> The CEWS is responsible for facilitating the anticipation and prevention of conflicts and works closely with regional organizations to gather early warning information which is then submitted to the situation room at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.<sup>15</sup> Operationalization of CEWS is achieved through collaboration with the early warning elements of the eight AU RECs, with each REC using conflict indicators premised on the peace and security context in its region.

However, in terms of the development of early warning, the various RECs are not at the same level. So far, ECOWAS and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) operate with data collection and analysis, which feed into the AU's CEWS for response strategies, while other RECs are still in the process of creating mechanisms for implementation.<sup>16</sup> In addition, there are also differences in the implementation

of conflict early warning at the regional level. IGAD's early warning, for example, operates as an open information center while SADC's National Early Warning System (NEWC) is highly linked with the intelligence community within the region,<sup>17</sup> making the latter more state-centric. There are also variations in focus. Whereas ECOWAS places a heavy emphasis on human security through a broad range of thematic areas, SADC, on the other hand, focuses on threats emanating from socio-economic dynamics. Similarly, IGAD's early warning system, CEWARN, is mandated to mitigate escalation of violent conflicts, especially cross-border pastoral conflicts, through collaboration with established national early warning systems, while the East African Community (EAC) looks at security among member states, inter-state defense, intra-state conflicts, poverty, and issues arising from the sharing of cross-border natural resources, among others.<sup>18</sup>

Another integral element of CEWS is preventive diplomacy. Despite the challenges associated with its early response to some conflict situations, preventive diplomacy has been utilized by both the AU and RECs as a tool for intervening in conflicts, including election-related instability in Zimbabwe and Kenya in 2008.

Recognizing the imperative of non-state actors in developing and operationalizing early warning, Article 12 (3) of the AU's Peace and Security protocol calls for collaboration between RECs and CSOs in early warning activities.<sup>19</sup> Rarely is the need for cooperation with NGOs expressed so explicitly in official policy. Accordingly, IGAD relies on field monitors and local NGOs in pastoralist communities for early warning information.<sup>20</sup> In a similar vein, ECOWAS, through its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with WANEP, relies on early warning information and data analysis from the latter, amongst other sources, to respond to threats to security in various parts of the region. Through its partnership with WANEP, ECOWARN relies on open source information, focusing on human security. ECOWARN consists of an Observation and Monitoring Centre (OMC) based at the Early Warning Directorate at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja, Nigeria and National Early Warning Centers currently in the process of being deployed to replace the original four Zonal Bureaus in Benin, Burkina Faso, Liberia, and The Gambia. Each zone generates daily peace and security reports emanating from WANEP's Community Monitors to the OMC. WANEP's Peace Monitoring Centre (PMC), in collaboration with the OMC, is responsible for

collating and analyzing the early warning reports from Community Monitors before transmission to the President of ECOWAS for consideration and intervention.

ECOWAS's ability to foster strategic partnerships and cooperation with WANEP as a key agent of a sub-regional early warning system has contributed to making ECOWAS's early warning one of the most comprehensive and integrated systems for conflict prevention and management on the African continent.<sup>21</sup>

## WANEP'S EARLY WARNING CONTRIBUTIONS TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA

Beyond WANEP's collaboration with ECOWAS in the area of conflict data gathering, analysis, and reporting into ECOWARN, there are several conflict early warning intervention programs and activities aimed at enhancing peace and security in West Africa and, thereby, contributing to the APSA at the regional level.

Through its MOU with ECOWAS and the AU, WANEP has institutionalized NEWS in almost all ECOWAS countries. This regional reach plays a key role in determining threats to security, analyzing them, and providing recommendations for early response and mitigation. Moreover, WANEP's comprehensive array of early warning and response reports—situation reports, thematic reports, policy briefs, quarterly reports, and yearly security projections for West Africa—continue to influence national and regional responses and mitigation of threats to security.

WANEP also provides technical support for community peacebuilding through the institutionalization of dialogue, mediation, and strengthening of existing traditional peacebuilding infrastructure in communities across the region. This helps to increase resilience against threats to peace and security and promotes local community ownership in peacebuilding in states within the region. In this regard, WANEP has been building the capacity of stakeholders in farmer-herder conflicts through dialogue and mediation in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, and Niger. Additionally, WANEP supports national infrastructures for peace, especially the National Peace Councils (NPCs) in Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone through capacity-building and collaborative peace projects. The NPCs have become a model for enhancing national resilience and are being replicated in other West African countries.

Democratic transitions remain a challenge to peace and stability across West Africa. Given the enormously high stakes involved in Africa's

“winner-takes-all” elections, electoral periods are often characterized by deep tensions, occasioning fears for life and property among the populace. In response, WANEP developed the Election Monitoring, Analysis and Mitigation program (E-MAM) to support regional and states’ efforts to mitigate electoral violence. E-MAM monitors, analyzes, and reports on election-related violence in order to enable early response, and works to harness and develop local capacity for averting election violence. The program further enables ECOWAS and WANEP to gain access to community-based conflict information which is necessary for conflict prevention but was hitherto uncollected and unreported.

The program is currently implemented in all 15 ECOWAS member states to support the peaceful conduct of elections. In Côte d’Ivoire, for instance, WANEP, in support of the Ministry of Interior, trained and deployed over 2,000 monitors and observers across the country to provide incidence reports at polling centers during the 2015 election.<sup>22</sup> An Election Situation Room (ESR) was also set up to support the ECOWAS Election Observation Mission to serve as an information management center to disseminate reports to stakeholders on potential threats. Similarly, in Nigeria, WANEP’s E-MAM project created a space for validation of specific election violence and hotspot-mapping of potential risk areas across all 36 states in the country ahead of the 2019 elections.<sup>23</sup> Since its inception, E-MAM has contributed to enhancing local community ownership of peacebuilding and supporting existing local infrastructure for peace. A notable example is WANEP’s support to Ghana’s National Peace Council (NPC) in the area of preventing election violence.

WANEP designed the capacity-building project on dispute management for Election Management Bodies (EMBs) in West Africa to boost effective electoral dispute resolution. Participants from both Anglophone and Francophone countries including Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Benin have benefited from the program.<sup>24</sup>

In response to growing violent extremism as well as increased exploitation of children and youth, WANEP initiated peace education to inculcate the culture of non-violence, co-existence, tolerance, and respect for diversity. The program focuses on children and young people both in the formal and informal education sector to strengthen community resilience across the region. It also engages teaching and non-teaching staff as well as other duty bearers in communities—chiefs, elders, religious, and

opinion leaders, as well as family members—in the training of young people and children through dialogue and mediation clubs in schools and communities. In collaboration with governments, WANEP has also developed contextualized peace education curricula and teaching manuals and guides.

Of particular note is the incorporation of strategies for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) into peace education curriculum for schools in Nigeria and the Sahel. The CVE curriculum seeks to educate a critical mass of resilient citizens who can participate in the sustainable development of the Sahel region and Nigeria through good citizenship and contributions to the fight against violent extremism.<sup>25</sup> The peace education program in the Sahel also adopts a community mobilizing approach to achieve better social cohesion and resilience. WANEP has trained over 200 teachers in the application of the peace education manual and the establishment of peer mediation clubs.<sup>26</sup> Peer mediators have also experienced positive changes in their own lives,<sup>27</sup> and aggressiveness and bullying among students have reduced.<sup>28</sup>

Lobbying, advocacy, and sensitization are also pronounced in the non-formal approach WANEP adopts in its quest to create a broader space for youth engagement in decision-making at the community, national, and regional levels. This is aimed at bridging the chasm between youth and decision-making processes in their communities and mitigating intergenerational conflicts. Over time, this has helped integrate the “youth factor” into emerging discourses on peace and security in West Africa, as well as national and regional policies.<sup>29</sup>

In line with the growing recognition of the centrality of women to African peace and security, WANEP works through the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) and West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI) programs to enhance the role and capacity of women in peacebuilding. It also supports the ECOWAS Gender Directorate in line with the Women, Peace, and Security component of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (EPF). The program was instrumental in mobilizing Liberian women as a pressure group to force the warring parties into signing a peace agreement in Accra during the ECOWAS-led mediation process. The WIPNET initiative also preceded the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, demonstrating the flexibility and foresight of CSOs in promoting women’s participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. However, not all ECOWAS members have developed National Action Plans (NAPs) and strategies for effective

implementation of UNSCR 1325.<sup>30</sup> It has been noted that a lack of political will and technical know-how are some of the impediments confronting the development of the NAPs. In this regard, and in collaboration with the ECOWAS Gender Directorate as well as the Women, Peace and Security Institute (WPSI) of the Kofi Annan International Peacebuilding Training Centre (KAIPTC), WANEP developed guidelines for the development and implementation of NAPs on UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions in October 2012.<sup>31</sup> WANEP has also developed indicators in its early warning systems to monitor, report, and analyze various threats to security of women and children, which helps inform peace-building interventions at the national and regional levels. This contributes to filling the gaps in ECOWARN, which does not have specific indicators for the security of women.

More collaborative research is key to bridging the gaps between peace-building and policy-making, which has limited the effectiveness of early warning and conflict prevention across the continent. New platforms for engagement have been established with the University of Ghana, University of Ibadan, University of Cape Coast, KAIPTC, Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), and the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) of the Social Sciences Research Council, but more are needed to better understand and develop best practice in African peacebuilding.

The post-Cold War security environment of Africa continues to be dogged by varied threats. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, these threats are a mixed bag of old and new, but often the underlying causes of instability are the same. Governments and RECs need to do more to foster the key partnerships which allow CEWS to effectively respond and mitigate threats to peace and security at the local, national and international levels on the continent.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Mend the gap between early warning and early response.*** The persistent chasm between early warning and early response is one of the key lessons emerging out of WANEP's relatively short history. The effectiveness of a conflict early warning system is contingent on its capacity to anticipate real or imagined threats and inform appropriate institutions for early response and mitigation. However, this remains a challenge for CSOs operating in political environments

where power and decision-making are often viewed in zero-sum terms, and political calculations and sensitivities get in the way of action. Too often, early warning is not acted upon until it is too late.

2. *Motivate and sustain the ground-level elements of early warning systems.* As WANEP's experience has shown, effective early warning must be a "bottom up approach" whereby the community is engaged. Efforts should be made to link community to the state and regional elements of early warning in a more systemic way. Too often, the community level is under-resourced with many at this level serving as volunteers. The lack of funding at the community level often disempowers locals and limits the consistency of reporting incidents and evolving situations. Given that data is key to the effectiveness of early warning, this undermines the effectiveness of Africa's early warning systems.
3. *Ensure regular and long-term funding for early warning.* Funding has also been problematic insofar as it is mostly from external donors. Too often, the funds are short-term and limited in scope, and donors tend to demand results within unrealistic time-frames. More should be done to engage the African local private sector in supporting early warning in particular, and peacebuilding activities in general.
4. *Address the gender and youth dimensions of peacebuilding, and mainstream peace education in national curricula.* Gender, age, education, marriage, and access to resources all play a critical role in how power is distributed and performed at all levels of society. Despite the political rhetoric, patriarchy and the gerontocratic nature of politics at the local, national, and regional levels, continue to hinder the participation of women and youth in peacebuilding activities in Africa. African governments should develop, implement, and report out on the development and implementation of their National Action Plans in support of UN Resolution 1325. Furthermore, more must be done to mainstream peace education in national curricula across Africa in order to advance a strong culture of peace.
5. *Enhance collaboration among regional civil society organizations and regional economic communities.* Collaboration is essential to effective early warning and peacebuilding activities. But different, and at times competing, objectives among CSOs has limited their

cooperation, and thus weakened CSOs various platforms for engagement in peacebuilding. In addition, more could be done to enhance CSO collaboration with regional economic communities.

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PART III

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## Regional and International Dimensions of Peacebuilding



## CHAPTER 12

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# The African Union in Peacebuilding in Africa

*Gilbert M. Khadiagala*

## INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1990s, peacebuilding in Africa has evolved alongside measures to strengthen continental and regional institutions for intervention in the domestic affairs of member states. Marking a decisive departure from decades where African institutions had limited roles in such interventions, these initiatives coincided with the growing optimism about the power of African institutions to help post-conflict countries to reconstruct their socioeconomic and political fabrics. In almost 20 years of engagements, the African Union (AU) has had a mixed record in peacebuilding in Africa.

On one hand, the AU has innovated by articulating and defining policies to underwrite peacebuilding initiatives, notably the African Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy. Also, through the AU's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the AU has intervened in some post-conflict countries to help contribute to sustainable peace and development. On the other hand, the AU is a new actor in peacebuilding and thus has not had any tangible successes. For the most

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part, the AU has struggled with limited resources, expertise, and capacity to become an effective peacebuilding institution. In addition, the peacebuilding environment is saturated with multiple actors and interests that the AU cannot adequately compete with. In recent years, these constraints have been compounded by a resurgence of conflicts in some countries that benefitted from previous peacebuilding interventions. This has, in effect, diminished the consensus about the wisdom of peacebuilding and retarded the momentum for mobilization of resources for countries in conflicts.

This chapter weaves these themes in a narrative of Africa's attempts to build institutions of peace, security, governance, and post-conflict recovery from the early 1990s into the AU's articulation of the PCRD policy targeted at peacebuilding. I argue that while the AU has made bold moves to construct normative frameworks to strengthen common approaches to African conflicts, these efforts have yet to find critical resonance in contexts marked by the age-old fealty to sovereignty. There is a continental consensus on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction that has emerged out of years of AU activism and institution-building, but it has not led to substantive shifts in state practices, limiting the effectiveness of continental and regional institutions in these domains. Equally vital, sustainable peacebuilding ultimately hinges on national governance systems led by responsible and accountable leaders who are able to initiate and galvanize policies that address the myriad drivers of conflicts, including preventing the relapse into violence. The next section briefly discusses the formative debates on peacebuilding in Africa, followed by an examination of the AU's key institutions for peace and security since its formation in 2002. In section three, the analysis will focus on the African experiences of peacebuilding before the formation of the AU as a lead-up to a discussion on the PCRD policy. Finally, I will make some recommendations relating to the future role of the AU in peacebuilding.

## UNDERSTANDING PEACEBUILDING

Peacebuilding is a key concept in the reconstruction of states emerging from conflicts. From this perspective, it is inseparable from post-conflict reconstruction because it captures the whole array of activities and initiatives associated with state- and nation-building in the aftermath of civil wars.<sup>1</sup> Popularized in the early 1990s by the UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali's *Agenda for Peace*, peacebuilding was

conceptualized as the penultimate phase in a series of intervention moments including conflict prevention, peacemaking, and peacekeeping. As outlined in the report, the international community sought to:

Identify at the earliest possible stage situations that could produce conflict and to try through diplomacy to remove the sources of danger before violence results; where conflict erupts, to engage in peacemaking aimed at resolving the issues that have led to conflict; through peace-keeping, to work to preserve peace, however fragile, where fighting has been halted and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by peacemakers; to stand ready to assist in peacebuilding in its differing contexts: rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife; and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war; and in the largest sense, to address the deepest causes of conflict: economic despair, social injustice and political oppression.<sup>2</sup>

Framed as a comprehensive repertoire of engagements in the service of peace, security, governance, and development, peacebuilding was conceived to assist countries that were widely depicted as failed states.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, for countries recovering from conflict, peacebuilding became a linear and natural extension of peacemaking and peacekeeping, in essence, pegging the fortunes of peacebuilding on the prior intervention processes. Thus, in most post-conflict countries, the energies and resources expended in peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts, to a large extent, determined the successes of peacebuilding. In the early 1990s, for instance, hastily negotiated peace processes resulted in weak peace agreements that the parties could not implement despite the intervention of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions. Similarly, despite the UN's experiment in nation-building in Somalia, these efforts collapsed in part because of the failures of both peacekeeping and peacemaking.

The other critical factor in the formative debates about peacebuilding was the division of labor between international and national/local actors. The *Agenda for Peace* envisioned profound roles for the UN and the broader international community in steering war-torn states to recovery. Often these actors had significant roles in providing resources for peacemaking and peacekeeping where they were needed most. But despite the engagement of international actors in peacebuilding, such as the establishment in 2005 of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, there were expectations that national and local actors would gradually take more leadership in post-conflict reconstruction because these are long-term

engagements that require national ownership, capacity, and responsibility. As the UN Secretary-General's Policy Committee stated in May 2007:

Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels of conflict management and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and, therefore, relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.<sup>4</sup>

In recognition, therefore, of the adage that nations are built from within, and not from outside, some analysts depicted sustainable peacebuilding as limited and time-bound to permit local actors the space to strengthen local ownership.<sup>5</sup> In practice, also, the most successful post-conflict reconstruction efforts were those in which international actors gradually exited from peacebuilding initiatives. By contrast, the least successful cases have been where countries have lapsed back into conflict or where long-running peacekeeping missions such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have transitioned into peacebuilding activities.<sup>6</sup>

## AFRICAN INITIATIVES TOWARD PEACEBUILDING: FROM THE OAU TO THE AU

Owing to the multiplicity of conflicts that ensued since the 1980s, Africa made momentous contributions to the articulation and elaboration of norms that have become part of contemporary international conventions and protocols.<sup>7</sup> The civil conflicts in Chad and Uganda in the 1980s and Rwanda in the early 1990s led to novel experiments in intervention by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and neighboring countries to make peace and restore stability. These interventions brought pressure on the OAU to rethink the long-held commitment to sovereignty and non-interference, culminating in the OAU's decision in Cairo, Egypt, in June 1993 to establish a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Prevention. The Cairo Mechanism enabled the Secretary-General to be proactive in conflict prevention, management, and resolution in war-torn countries. In this respect, the Secretary-General was required to

“resort to eminent African personalities in consultation with the Authorities in their countries of origin. Where necessary, he may make use of other relevant expertise, send special envoys or special representatives as well as dispatch fact-finding missions to conflict areas.”<sup>8</sup> Like the Cairo Mechanism, which marked a critical moment in establishing the basis for intervention in domestic affairs, the OAU’s Lomé Declaration of 2000 inaugurated the principle that prohibited unconstitutional changes in government, a norm that has since formed the basis for democratization and constitutional rule in Africa.

Both norms were further solidified in the 2002 AU Constitutive Act which defines its roles in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>9</sup> Although the AU still retains the sovereignty of member states as one of its founding principles, it reserves the right of intervention in member states under Article 4(h) in the case of “grave circumstance, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.”<sup>10</sup> Under Article 30, the AU is obliged to impose sanctions on a member state where there has been an unconstitutional change of government. These articles capture the principle of non-indifference, which justifies the AU’s fundamental roles in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Overall, since its formation, the AU has attempted to become the major fulcrum for the promotion of accelerated socio-economic integration, security and stability initiatives, greater respect for human rights, and democracy in very difficult circumstances where the AU is still trying to find its institutional feet and legitimacy.<sup>11</sup>

In the pursuit of common approaches to African problems, the AU created two main institutions for peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction which form part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA): first, the Peace and Security Council (PSC), charged with the responsibility of promoting peace, security and stability, anticipating conflicts and undertaking preventative diplomacy, and making peace through the use of mediation and conciliation. The PSC has the additional responsibilities for peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction, humanitarian action, and disaster management. Second, APSA comprises a Continental Early Warning System for conflict prevention, the Panel of the Wise (a group of leaders who intervene to mediate conflicts), the African Standby Force (ASF) for peacekeeping purposes, and a Peace Fund, a facility to provide resources for peace support activities.<sup>12</sup>

Although the AU was established as the primary institution responsible for peace and security, the enormity of peacebuilding roles and the

constraints it faces propelled other continental, regional, and multilateral institutions to remain relevant in peacebuilding. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a crucial program of the AU in tackling socio-economic and political factors that contribute to conflict and instability. NEPAD is also tasked with supporting post-conflict reconstruction through the mobilization of resources for the AU Peace Fund. The other African actors are the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), which the AU has engaged in peace and security issues because of proximity to post-conflict countries and their experiences in conflict management peace initiatives. At the continental level, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) have contributed ideas and resources in peacebuilding. Similarly, bilateral and multilateral donor institutions occupy distinctive spaces in the multiple activities embodied in peacebuilding.<sup>13</sup>

Because of the involvement of many actors in peacebuilding, the AU has confronted a competitive and crowded environment that is replete with both opportunities and constraints. As it has gradually defined its peacebuilding posture, the AU is slowly starting to appreciate forging collaborations with NEPAD, AfDB, UNECA, and RECs to be effective.<sup>14</sup> As a new institution in a field in which it has limited experience or clout, the AU is still grappling with questions about the division of labor between it and other African institutions. These dilemmas are even more heightened with respect to the AU's relationships with bilateral and multilateral donors that are oftentimes characterized by both competition and complementarity. Ultimately, decisions about when and how the AU engages with international donors in peacebuilding are dependent on the comparative strengths and resources it can bring to specific post-conflict contexts.

## **PEACEBUILDING BEFORE THE AFRICAN Post-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT (PCRD) POLICY**

Before the formation of the AU, two dominant trends characterized peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa.<sup>15</sup> The first could be labeled as the “victor's peace,”<sup>16</sup> drawing from the experiences of Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda, and Angola where strong leaders who had triumphed in the civil wars set the pace of reconstruction with the support of multilateral and bilateral donors. In Uganda, after seizing

power in 1986, President Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) instituted a non-partisan coalition of forces that launched a remarkable process of national rejuvenation and led multiple reforms to resuscitate the economy and legitimate his authority.<sup>17</sup>

Eritrea and Ethiopia followed Uganda's reconstruction model after the end of the civil conflict in the early 1990s. In both countries, strong parties that had prosecuted the war—the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)—emerged as the primary players in economic and political reconstruction.<sup>18</sup> In post-genocide Rwanda, Paul Kagame's Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) launched a reconstruction process that borrowed largely from the Eritrea-Ethiopia-Uganda template: rebuilding state institutions and economic, social, and infrastructural reforms.<sup>19</sup> Like the previous cases, Rwanda's post-conflict reconstruction was dominated by a strong leader who has garnered legitimacy through the incremental improvement in social and economic conditions and the generosity of international donors who considered President Kagame as representing the new generation of African leader determined to build strong and functional states. In 2002, Angola, which had struggled for decades to find peace and stability, embarked on the process of reconstruction and reconciliation following the killing of Jonas Savimbi, leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), by the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Subsequently, the MPLA dictated the pace of post-reconstruction unimpeded.<sup>20</sup>

The second pattern could be depicted as "democratic peacebuilding," represented by Mozambique's post-conflict reconstruction. Mozambique's experience of post-conflict reconstruction involved a relatively open and participatory trajectory after the civil war. Following the holding of the first multi-party elections in 1994, the former protagonists—FRELIMO and RENAMO—steadily learned to accommodate each other as they started on the road to economic reconstruction and social rehabilitation. Although Mozambique faced the resurgence of violence in 2013–2014 because of RENAMO's resumption of the war, the two sides have managed to return to the compromises of the mid-1990s to reinvigorate reconciliation.<sup>21</sup> However, in recent years, a new source of Islamist insurgency in Northern Mozambique has arisen to compromise the post-conflict gains of peace and stability.<sup>22</sup>

Most of the countries transiting from war in the early to mid-2000s such as Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan emulated the Mozambique model as they went through the various stages from peacemaking, peacekeeping, and eventually, peacebuilding that emphasized the importance of democratic institutions in the transitions. Other than the participation of RECs and the AU in peacemaking and peacekeeping initiatives in these countries, the AU had few opportunities to influence their post-conflict futures, ceding these responsibilities to the AfDB and other international donors. These latter actors could mobilize the financial and technical resources to make a difference in peacebuilding. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, the AU through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) lent broad legitimacy to the international efforts for stabilization and economic reconstruction. After the formation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2005, Burundi and Sierra Leone became its first African partners, signaling the enhanced role of international actors in peacebuilding. In both countries, alongside the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other donors, the UN Peacebuilding Commission implemented a number of projects meant to consolidate peace, build local capacity to manage conflicts, and prevent the recurrence of conflicts. Similarly, when the CAR appeared to be on the road to stability following the elections of 2005, the UN Peacebuilding Commission invited it as a partner in 2008 to mobilize resources for economic development and national reconciliation.

The only major initiative that the AU attempted on post-conflict reconstruction was in July 2003 when the AU Commission established a Ministerial Committee on Sudan in anticipation of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the North and South. Chaired by South Africa, the Committee was mandated to consult with the government of Sudan and the South Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) on post-conflict reconstruction and development needs and to mobilize African and international resources. But this committee did not make any progress in its resource mobilization campaigns.

### *The Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy*

Soon after its formation in 2002, the AU charged NEPAD with the mandate of drafting a post-conflict policy to guide African interventions. The quandary for the drafters must have been that since the 1990s, African regional institutions had largely been marginal in peacebuilding

initiatives as various post-conflict countries engaged international donors in economic and political reconstruction. What meaningful contribution would the AU then be expected to make in post-conflict reconstruction in circumstances where it had no prior proficiency, capacity, and resources? Moreover, since there were two previous dominant patterns of post-conflict reconstruction, what would be preferable for Africa's future? Since the policy was unveiled in 2006, these questions have remained salient in its implementation.

In an attempt to chart a different course from the linear and sequenced intervention model found in the *Agenda for Peace*, the PCRD sought a comprehensive approach to embrace a wide range of peacebuilding interventions and initiatives.<sup>23</sup> In the articulation of the policy, the AU established links between peace, security, humanitarianism, and development. As stated in the preamble of the PCRD:

As the custodian of peace and security on the continent, the AU is obligated to generate a strategic framework for PCRD that is aligned to the African vision and aspirations. Furthermore, given the complexity of post-conflict reconstruction initiatives, it elaborates in a comprehensive manner the entire spectrum of activity areas that are crucial for the consolidation of peace, and stipulates minimum standards of application and benchmarks for measuring performance of countries that are on their path to recovery.<sup>24</sup> As a policy framework it provides a model that is adapted to specific country situations, and because of its reflection of African needs and aspirations, it will empower and encourage affected countries to take the lead in the reconstruction and development of their societies.<sup>25</sup>

Toward this end, the policy seeks to: (i) help address the root causes of conflict; (ii) encourage the planning and implementation of reconstruction activities; and (iii) enhance complementarities and coordination among diverse actors engaged in PCRD processes. Some of its underlying principles include African leadership, national and local ownership, and capacity-building for sustainability. Although seeking to carve out a distinctive policy, however, the PCRD's six main areas of concerns are indistinguishable from conventional approaches to peacebuilding including: (a) restoration of security; (b) managing of political transitions; (c) socioeconomic development; (d) human rights, justice, and reconciliation; and (e) women and youth.<sup>26</sup> With respect to the critical issue of resources for post-conflict reconstruction, the PCRD suggested more African contributions to PCRD initiatives and the establishment of a joint

AU/NEPAD Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit to coordinate donor disbursements to PCRD programs. The Unit would also undertake advocacy and develop post-conflict reconstruction programs in partnership with RECs, civil society, and other intergovernmental organizations.<sup>27</sup>

Following the launch of the PCRD, the AU's engagement in post-conflict countries did not change dramatically, reflecting the preference for peacemaking and peacekeeping engagements rather than peace-building. The dominant approach to post-conflict reconstruction has been the establishment of liaison offices in countries emerging from conflict. By 2016, there were 16 such offices in countries including Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the CAR, Guinea-Bissau, South Sudan, and Madagascar. As Chido Mutangadura has noted, "these offices have been criticized for having little impact, especially as they lack the capacity to effectively coordinate the AU's goals on the ground and link them to decisions made in Addis Ababa."<sup>28</sup> In South Sudan and Madagascar, the AU liaison offices did not have the resources or diplomatic clout to influence the course of events and thus amount to no more than post offices for the AU.<sup>29</sup> In West Africa, ECOWAS has been the AU's principal entry point in resolving conflicts in Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau, but both ECOWAS and the AU have had no roles in the post-conflict reconstruction phase.<sup>30</sup>

Although the adoption of the PCRD policy in 2006 represented a major milestone in AU efforts to coordinate and support peacebuilding efforts, enormous organizational and operational hurdles, insufficient human and financial resources, and lack of political interest by the majority of member states have compromised effective implementation. Since its formation, the PCRD has been manned by one full-time individual working within the AU Peace and Security Department (AU PSD). In recent years, the AU has indicated the need to create an interdepartmental task force on PCRD in the AU PSD, but this office has yet to be created. To break the stalemate over the management of the PCRD, the Egyptian government agreed to establish an AU Center for PCRD in February 2019.<sup>31</sup> It is not yet clear how the new AU Center will coordinate its roles with the AU institutions in Addis Ababa. One of the major complaints about the PCRD is that it has not sufficiently reached out to other AU organs such as the Departments of Political, Social, and Economic Affairs or RECs. Locating the new AU Center in Cairo is going to make it much more difficult to accomplish this objective.<sup>32</sup>

To mobilize African resources, the AU launched the African Solidarity Initiative (ASI) in July 2012 with a call to encourage African countries to assist post-conflict countries in their reconstruction and development efforts. At its launch, member countries, the AfDB, and the UNECA lauded the ASI optimistically as a unique vehicle for resource mobilization and its potential to promote peer learning and sharing best practices among post-conflict countries, but it never emerged as a credible initiative to meet the needs of the PCRD. In February 2014, South Africa's then-President Jacob Zuma hosted the first conference of the ASI at which African countries pledged a paltry US \$3 million for PCRD activities, reflecting the lack of political will for PCRD.<sup>33</sup> This amount contrasts sharply with the AfDB's Fragile States Facility (now Transition Support Facility) created in 2008, with a budget of US \$600 million to provide reconstruction funds to beneficiary countries, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, the DRC, the CAR, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, and South Sudan.

Lacking any meaningful resources, the AU only managed to undertake assessment missions to the CAR (2006), Liberia and Sierra Leone (2009), the DRC and Burundi (2010), and South Sudan (2011) to ascertain the post-conflict demands of these countries. Further, to support the PCRD, the AU raised some funds to support Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and “peace-strengthening projects” at the community level in the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan. In 2017, the AU noted as one of its achievements, the development of operational guidelines for the adoption of the PCRD at regional and national levels, the creation of a database of African experts on PCRD, and the establishment of an AU Standing Multi-dimensional Committee on PCRD.<sup>34</sup>

The PCRD's resource limitations have reinforced its organizational, operational, and capacity deficits and contributed to the widespread African skepticism about its utility. This skepticism is captured in comments by two African analysts. According to Tim Murithi: “Even though the PCRD exists, it is, however, unclear whether the AU/NEPAD will be able to mobilize their resources and build the capacity to undertake peace-building effectively.”<sup>35</sup> In the same vein, Richard Gueli suggested: “The inconvenient truth is that even if the AU did prepare a plan for rebuilding a country, international aid agencies would probably ignore it... In short, the AU wants ownership of reconstruction processes, yet few, if any, African governments are doing anything to challenge

the factors that perpetuate the donor domination of the development agenda.”<sup>36</sup>

The 10th anniversary of the PCRD in October 2016 coincided with the relapse into conflicts of countries that had made steady strides in peacebuilding such as Mali, the CAR, and South Sudan raising profound questions about the lack of progress in the implementation of the PCRD policy. At the meeting, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui, acknowledged the capacity deficits “ranging from planning and conceptualization of projects and programmes, to the execution, monitoring and evaluation at national and regional levels.”<sup>37</sup> Most participants decried the AU’s failure to leverage the work of bodies such as the AfDB and the UN Peacebuilding Commission that have more experience and resources to pursue post-conflict reconstruction and called for more coherence among the various entities of the AU with the relevant expertise in PCRD.<sup>38</sup>

A more recent innovation that seeks to inject momentum in the PCRD is the deployment of an African Union Technical Support Team to The Gambia (AUTSTG) to help the country’s democratic transition following the ouster of long-time authoritarian leader, Yahya Jammeh. Although not technically a post-conflict country, the AU launched the AUTSTG in 2018 to provide expertise to the government on the rule of law, democracy, transitional justice, and security sector transformation.<sup>39</sup> Unlike the AU liaison offices which are staffed by diplomats, the ten technical experts in the AUTSTG are seconded from AU member states and work directly with government ministries to build capacity in their respective areas. While this intervention potentially marks a vital departure in efforts to implement the PCRD, there are still lingering questions about its sustainability given the uncertainties in funding and the receptiveness of the Gambian government officials to African expert entreaties.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *National ownership of peacebuilding is essential.* It is worth reiterating that peacebuilding starts and ends at national levels, with international and continental actors playing only supportive roles. The most successful experiences of peacebuilding in Africa reveal that while societies emerging out of armed conflicts face tremendous obstacles in reducing polarization, creative efforts by national

leaders in building governance systems that are inclusive, participatory, and restore trust across communities are necessary for laying the foundations for regeneration and recovery. The primary responsibility of post-conflict reconstruction and development is, therefore, that of national governments, that must identify priorities, formulate strategies, and implement programs and activities to provide the conditions necessary for sustainable peace.

2. *Manage the African Union's capacity and resource constraints in line with its comparative advantage.* In the short to medium-term, the African Union's African Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) will not acquire sufficient resources to be a credible actor in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. It is unlikely that the AU will develop the expertise and capabilities in the many activities that encompass the PCRD. PCRD is a huge task for an institution that is struggling to build basic infrastructure for peace, stability, and democratic governance. Since the organizational and resource challenges that have hobbled the PCRD will not go away, it is unrealistic for the PCRD to solicit resources from donors who are devoting resources to the same post-conflict reconstruction chores. To overcome these competitive pressures for resources, the PCRD will need to disengage from areas where it lacks competence and where it cannot mobilize local resources. Without comparative competence in most of these activities, the most realistic approach would be for the AU to leave them to actors who can make a substantive contribution, particularly the African Development Bank (AfDB) and other international bodies.
3. *Deepen normative frameworks for conflict prevention.* The African Union should invest more efforts in consolidating the normative frameworks and shared values on democratic governance, anti-corruption and economic governance, youth and women's inclusion, and transitional justice, and instill a culture of compliance through national and sub-regional instruments. The ECOWAS interventions in several countries to promote democratization and the rule of law underscore the fact that strong regional institutions are critical in the internalization of continental and regional norms.<sup>40</sup> The regional nature of conflicts in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and Great Lakes regions points to the importance of

investing in conflict prevention and early warning systems. Ultimately, conflict prevention is one of the antidotes to African conflicts.

4. *Create a continental framework on peer learning for peace-building.* There is very little learning of previous post-conflict experiences in Africa because of the absence of systematic programs for lesson drawing within the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) or the African Union. A database of comparative post-conflict reconstruction experiences would be a good start in the accretion of such knowledge that will inform future interventions.

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## CHAPTER 13

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# Trends in SADC Mediation and Long-Term Conflict Transformation

*Dimpho Deleglise*

## INTRODUCTION

Conflict recurrence and the limited duration of peace settlements in Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Madagascar in the last ten years provides the rationale for examining the approach of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to mediate conflicts in member countries. Studies show that SADC's acquiescence to long-serving Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe during its mediation period between 2007/2008 and 2013 led to the organization's endorsement of two undemocratic elections that prolonged Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic crisis. SADC's handling of Lesotho's political turbulence between 2014 and 2017 also reproduced its instability, making the small country one with the highest number of government turnovers in the SADC region. Madagascar's political crisis from 2009 was left to drag on owing to dissonance between itself and the African Union (AU), also engaged in Madagascar at the time.<sup>1</sup>

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In all three countries, post-conflict recovery was overshadowed by reversals in fundamental freedoms, civil liberties, and checks on government that mirrored the deterioration in democratic institutions and the rule of law. These countries continued to be dominated by ruling parties with links to the military and security services, and socio-economic recovery has stalled for many years. As both an intergovernmental organization and a Regional Economic Community (REC), SADC mediation in the three countries has had its fair share of politics. These have been spurred by deeply ingrained patterns of avoiding confrontation with its member states and the compulsion to close ranks on issues concerning governance deficits.

While mediation efforts cannot lead to holistic societal transformations overnight, this chapter argues that SADC failed to lay the groundwork for such transformations and consequently was unable to find a balance between ending these conflicts and fulfilling longer-term agendas for sustainable peace. SADC mediation traditionally pursues “track one” diplomacy; hence its primary occupation has been to secure agreements between political and military elites. But, civil society organizations and other non-state actors have increasingly underlined the importance of including a broader variety of actors like themselves in SADC’s mediation process. For an organization that essentially functions on the basis of an elite consensus, this debate has been polarizing within the organization and among policy practitioners.

### SYSTEMIC CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION FRAMEWORK AND MEDIATION

The departing point of this chapter is that the kind of peace envisaged through a mediation process matters to the viability of the agreements and resolutions made. Organizations like SADC should seek to support long-term solutions which hinge both on the demilitarization of politics and investment in effective institutions of participation and development. They should specifically invest in attaining what Johan Galtung refers to as “positive peace,” as opposed to “negative peace,” often reflected in mediation approaches that view peace agreements solely as end products. Galtung challenged what he perceived to be a simplistic use of the concept of peace in international relations and conflict. He questioned whether a peace concept that does not exclude at least severe forms of inequality, subservience, and exploitation was really fruitful. His argument was that

peace was often negatively defined or determined by its absence.<sup>2</sup> Charles Weibel similarly conceived that conflict is not the antithesis of peace, and that conflicts may, perhaps paradoxically, promote and increase peace and diminish violence if the conflicting parties negotiate in good faith to reach solutions to problems that are achievable and tolerable, if not ideal.<sup>3</sup> He also developed a peace index that categorizes countries' peace profiles as ranging from "strong or durable" (roughly equivalent to Galtung's description of positive peace) to "weak or fragile" peace.<sup>4</sup>

This thinking is well captured by the systemic conflict transformation (SCT) framework. It explains conflict mediation processes that pay attention to constructive change in contexts where repeated and deep-rooted cycles of conflict episodes exist.<sup>5</sup> It is based on the idea that interventions in conflict situations need to reflect the complexity of conflict systems, and should seek to reduce this complexity as part of the outcomes of any intervention. This is based on the assumption that for mediation to contribute to positive change, third party interventions must seek to: constructively transform conflict systems; support processes of comprehensive social change; allow local actors to drive social change through an inclusive approach; and deal with the power asymmetries that hamper a transformation in relationships between actors in the political system.<sup>6</sup> The SCT paradigm, therefore, strongly stresses that organizations not only seek to manage or resolve conflicts, but also transforms them by helping to change the relationship between the parties and, more broadly, in society. This includes addressing the structural causes that originally led to the conflict. In this chapter, the shortcomings of SADC's mediation approach, as analyzed through the SCT lens, are enumerated. These, or at least some of them, can be overcome if mediation processes are conceptualized to incorporate conflict transformation.

### *SADC's Policy and Institutional Framework for Mediation*

SADC's peacemaking mandate is implied in its founding treaty and more so in its 1996 protocol that established its security structure, the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation (OPDSC).<sup>7</sup> The text of the protocol outlines a range of objectives in relation to peacemaking. This includes reference to the Organ's responsibilities to "manage and seek to resolve inter and intra state conflict by peaceful means" and that the methods employed "to prevent, manage and resolve conflict by

peaceful means shall include preventive diplomacy, negotiations, conciliation, mediation, good offices, arbitration and adjudication by an international tribunal.”<sup>8</sup> Specifically, the protocol states that all mediation efforts be authorized by the SADC Summit—SADC’s supreme policy-making institution, made up of the sitting presidents of its member states<sup>9</sup>—and lists the following aims: the defense and maintenance of democracy, peace, security, and stability; and that SADC exists to promote common political values and systems in its member states that are transmitted through democratic, legitimate, and effective institutions.<sup>10</sup>

SADC’s mandate to mediate conflicts in its member countries, therefore, means that it can involve itself in the internal affairs of sovereign states, and hold them accountable to implementing decisions flowing from the peace agreements it facilitated. While this is a vital and even foundational matter, the SADC Treaty determines the degree of its involvement. Moreover, the compliance of member states to its agreements is treated with ambiguity and contradiction in the Treaty. To illustrate, in formal terms, members cede important decision-making powers to SADC by virtue of the fact that the Treaty gives SADC jurisdiction over the affairs of its members.<sup>11</sup> But this jurisdiction is both limited and, more importantly, contested by the member states themselves. The implementation of all SADC decisions by member states, including peace agreements, is also affected by its principles guiding the implementation of its policies outlined in the Treaty. In particular, the concept of variable geometry. Variable geometry basically acknowledges that member states have varying levels of development and on that logic, they should be given flexibility and leeway in the implementation of SADC policies. For instance, a member state can claim that it lacks institutional capacity to implement a regional political program and effectively evade its obligations. This is a claw-back clause so countries can evoke the argument that their institutions are yet to mature to the level required to implement regional agreements. The SADC Treaty also prescribes (in Article 33) when and what kinds of sanctions the organization can impose on a member state. In practice, it has only ever sanctioned countries for being in arrears financially, but never for violating the terms of peace agreements that SADC has facilitated.

SADC’s mediation structure, formally called the “Mediation, Conflict Prevention and Preventative Diplomacy Structure,” only started to take shape in 2010.<sup>12</sup> It comprises a mediation support unit (MSU) located in the OPDSC Directorate, a Panel of Elders (PoE), and a mediation

reference group (MRG). The MRG is meant to increase the use of mediation by SADC member states as a tool for the prevention, containment, and resolution of conflict by peaceful means; and strengthen their understanding of the root causes and potential causes of conflict in SADC countries. This explains the decision to staff it with officials from member states. However, the PoE is not yet operational. Diplomatic engagements by member states fill its gap. Once operational, it will be comprised of five members who are highly regarded political, civic, or religious leaders. Fifty percent of these are supposed to come from the governmental sector and the rest from the non-governmental sector. This structure is semi-functional, and SADC has maintained its reluctance to formally include non-state actors in its mediation processes.

## TRENDS IN SADC MEDIATION IN ZIMBABWE, LESOTHO, AND MADAGASCAR

### *Zimbabwe*

In its early mediation efforts, SADC took a case-by-case approach, relying on political leaders and individual countries appointed as its mediators to make decisions instead of SADC as a collective entity. Generally, SADC mediation interventions can be grouped into three fluid categories: (i) those concerning election-related disputes, as were the case in Zimbabwe and Lesotho in 2007; (ii) those assisting a country or conflicting parties to overcome a political impasse; and (iii) those where a military has sought to usurp power, as was the case with Madagascar's 2009 coup and Lesotho's coup attempt in 2014. In all three categories, the legitimacy and legality of political power was an important conflict-causing factor. SADC applied relatively different approaches and resources to those conflicts, depending on the mediation actors, the country's geostrategic features, and its own capacities.

The SADC mediation in Zimbabwe took place in two stages. The first was in March 2007 when the SADC Summit mandated President Mbeki of South Africa to "facilitate dialogue between the opposition and government" following an international outcry over a police crackdown on opposition activists in Zimbabwe. SADC was reluctant to intervene, having agreed publicly that the election crisis was essentially a result of the need for land redistribution, and therefore caused by Western sanctions.<sup>13</sup> There was no mention of the political, governance, and security issues

that were apparent in the overt violence that characterized Mugabe's rule. The initial Mbeki involvement was thus narrowly focused on institutional conditions for the next round of elections in 2008. As such, issues like the brutal violence orchestrated by Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Forces (ZANU-PF) forces nationwide to tip the election in its favor, and the evolving humanitarian crisis impacting on the electorate, were neglected.<sup>14</sup>

A first outcome of the Mbeki talks was registered five months into the negotiations. The talks agreed to a constitutional amendment—Constitutional Amendment No. 18, which was subsequently adopted by the Zimbabwean Parliament. But Michael Aeby argues that ZANU-PF drafted the amendment unilaterally. The amendment altered the presidential term from six to five years, and reduced the parliamentary term by two years. The Amendment also empowered the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to redefine constituency boundaries, but subject to parliamentary approval before elections could take place.<sup>15</sup> Mugabe also deliberately set an early date for the election in 2008, and Mbeki downplayed the concerns of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) about both the unilateral constitutional amendment and the early election date. Mbeki also downplayed these concerns in his reports to the SADC Organ, which consequently emphasized procedural and not substantive issues. Aeby concludes that this was a major reason why SADC accepted that early elections could be held with only minimal reforms in place.<sup>16</sup>

The March 2008 elections took place in an environment of limited external scrutiny. Eldred Masunungure explains that the government had refused to accredit “unfriendly” foreign observers. The military had overtly taken over and had become the arbiter of Zimbabwe’s fate during this period.<sup>17</sup> The first election results that began to trickle in showed that ZANU-PF had lost to the MDC in its main constituencies. The electoral commission then stopped announcing results and froze them for five weeks. SADC remained non-intrusive, adopting a “wait-and-see” approach on how the impasse would be resolved. The results were reported to be inconclusive and a runoff presidential election was to be convened within 21 days in terms of the country’s electoral laws.

The ZANU-PF government extended the period to 90 days. The period (prior to the runoff election) was characterized by violence unleashed mainly by ZANU-PF youth militia and the state security forces against opposition members and supporters. This was captured in the

preliminary statement of SADC's observer mission.<sup>18</sup> Opposition leader and Mugabe's main contender, Morgan Tsvangirai, withdrew from the race after then-SADC Chair, President Levy Mwanawasa of Zambia, had reportedly urged him to pull out. Mugabe won the elections with 85.5 percent of the vote, which SADC and African Union (AU) observers declared illegitimate. He was then sworn in again as the country's president. This pushed the AU's involvement in Zimbabwe as it effectively refused to recognize the June election results.<sup>19</sup> The AU Summit met in Egypt from June 30 to July 2, 2008, and directed SADC to intervene to resolve the impasse, ostensibly over the illegitimacy of Mugabe's presidency. It motivated for "a negotiated solution," and expressed its support for a government of national unity.<sup>20</sup> SADC called on Mbeki to lead negotiations over a government of national unity in Zimbabwe. The negotiations started on July 21, 2008, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by the MDC and ZANU-PF in which they committed themselves to dialogue and to concluding a Global Political Agreement (GPA). The GPA was produced in September 2008, and provided for a Transitional Government, mandated, among others, with preparing the country for free and fair elections by drafting a constitution; holding a referendum; promoting equality, national healing, cohesion, and unity; undertaking security sector reform; and reconstituting the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, Media Commission, and the Human Rights Commission.<sup>21</sup>

Mbeki stepped down as SADC mediator in late 2008 and was replaced by Jacob Zuma, who assumed the South African presidency in 2009. The thrust of SADC's mediation mission under Zuma from 2009 to 2013 was to push for full implementation of the GPA. But, in Zimbabwe, implementation of the GPA had run into serious difficulties, with the inclusive government seemingly backing away from meeting some of its provisions. Eventually, the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC) was set up to monitor the GPA but its structure was deeply flawed: it only comprised representatives of signatories to the GPA and ZANU-PF officials rejected moves by SADC to second its own officials to JOMIC. They believed such a mechanism would constitute interference in Zimbabwe's internal affairs. Mugabe then proceeded to call for elections in April 2013, despite widely held views that the country was not ready for elections, and that he and his party had failed to comply with the GPA.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, elections took place. The election results, which the MDC deemed flawed, showed Mugabe winning 61 percent of the

vote, thus securing his continued tenure as president. SADC terminated its mission in Zimbabwe as soon as it had endorsed the 2013 elections. Meanwhile, JOMIC died a natural death.

### *Madagascar*

Madagascar was plunged into a different crisis two years into Mbeki's mediation in Zimbabwe when Andry Rajoelina toppled sitting president, Marc Ravalomanana, in a decisive coup d'état. Ravalomanana fled the country and was mostly exiled in South Africa. SADC reacted by convening an Extraordinary Summit on Madagascar led by Swaziland's King Mswati,<sup>23</sup> who was the OPDSC Chair at the time. It eventually deployed a mission to the capital, Antananarivo. The SADC mission arrived only to find AU and United Nations (UN) missions on the ground, and tensions and confusion brewed over which organization had a genuine mandate to lead the mediation process.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, SADC resolved at its summit that Ravalomanana be reinstated and threatened to use force if this was not done.<sup>25</sup> Three months later, having made no headway, SADC shifted from a militarist posture to a mediatory one.<sup>26</sup> It decided to establish a mediation team led by former Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano, while the AU and UN appointed its own mediators. The leadership incoherence between the three organizations was later resolved: the AU and the UN dissolved their mediation team and SADC became the sole mediator to the crisis. The backlash was soon felt by the SADC mediation team on many fronts. Foremost was that the team was relatively small and the new regime had exploited the leadership coordination quarrel by using the time to entrench itself into government.

The SADC mediator's approach was to reach a compromise between the political elites and it facilitated negotiations that resulted in a power-sharing accord.<sup>27</sup> Under the accord, Ravalomanana would not be reinstated as outlined in SADC's initial communiqué. Instead, an interim, inclusive government, led by Rajoelina, would be set up to oversee a 15-month transitional period and elections. Laurie Nathan argues that at this stage, Chissano's deviation from the principled position of the Summit derived from an assumption that he was providing for inclusivity, consensus, and compromise.<sup>28</sup> But, the accord failed to resolve the crisis and Chissano persevered with the mediation. In January 2011, Chissano produced a roadmap that entailed another major compromise of democracy.<sup>29</sup> The roadmap allowed the coup perpetrators to contest

elections and denied this opportunity to Ravalomanana, who was barred from returning to Madagascar until the new government decided that a favorable political and security climate existed. Local diplomats concluded that Chissano had capitulated to the junta.<sup>30</sup>

SADC removed Chissano as the mediator and insisted that Ravalomanana be free to contest the poll. Over the next 18 months, SADC mediators were unable to secure the compliance of the regime. In 2012, the SADC Summit backed down and adopted the “ni-ni” solution, under which neither Ravalomanana nor Rajoelina would run for president.<sup>31</sup> The two politicians eventually agreed to this. SADC then set up a liaison office in Madagascar in April 2012 to support mediation activities in the country. But it was too little, too late. The country held elections in late 2013, but has since struggled to stabilize its government and implement economic reforms owing to a lack of institutionalized democracy and governance mechanisms.<sup>32</sup> Some of the most pressing challenges that remain include a lack of civilian authority and control over the security forces; human rights abuses, including arbitrary or unlawful killing; a lack of judicial independence; and restrictions on freedom of speech and press.<sup>33</sup> In September 2015, SADC sent a “Special Envoy’s advance team” to Madagascar for five days with staff from its MSU. The Mission submitted its report with findings and recommendations to SADC, some of which were that Madagascar’s former heads of state were a divisive group, and indicated unconditional willingness to work with the SADC Special Envoy to address existing differences among themselves; and to provide the necessary guidance and support to the national reconciliation process. This conclusion proved that the initial mediation process had gone awry along the way and that there was a need to focus more on the substantive aspects of the mediation, as opposed to concentrating exclusively on the procedural ones.

### *Lesotho*

Similar to SADC’s past interventions in Lesotho, its intervention in the country’s political crisis from 2014 was precipitated by a coup attempt. However, the veracity of the coup attempt was contested in Lesotho and SADC evaded the matter altogether, fanning the flames of the crisis during that time. Despite varied accounts, what later emerged through careful documentation and investigation is that in August 2014, Lesotho’s Prime Minister, Thomas Thabane, asked for a military intervention from

SADC, having reported an attempted military coup in his country that forced him to flee to South Africa. What transpired was that the country's army general at the time, Tlali Kamoli, had defied orders to leave office, and was later believed to have orchestrated plots to assassinate the Prime Minister, some high-ranking military officials, and politicians not aligned with him. This compelled Thabane's exile to South Africa, along with other opposition and security officials. The Prime Minister's request to SADC for a military intervention was not granted. SADC eventually downplayed the coup allegation despite the apparent tensions surrounding a politicized and partisan security apparatus the issue had brought.<sup>34</sup> These issues were well known to South Africa and SADC. The 2014 intervention would be the organization's fifth in the country's history. As such, South Africa has both witnessed and been involved in mediating Lesotho's cyclical conflicts since its independence in 1966. All share a common heritage of faltering democratic rule, coups, and coup attempts that have all undermined state capacity and legitimacy for generations. It goes without saying that Lesotho's conflict equation exhibits some common and consistent features: it follows or is precipitated by power struggles in the military, power struggles within governing parties, or a change in government.<sup>35</sup>

Following SADC's rebuff of the coup allegation, it appointed then-South African Deputy President, Cyril Ramaphosa, to act as a SADC facilitator in Lesotho. His specific mandate was to "facilitate the restoration of political and security stability in the short and long terms."<sup>36</sup> SADC deployed an observer team to Maseru, known as the SADC Observer Mission in Lesotho (SOMILES), made up of police officers and military personnel from various member states. The peace process facilitated by Ramaphosa resulted in an agreement in October to schedule snap elections in 2015. Six months after the reported attempted coup, Lesotho held its snap elections, which the SADC facilitator promoted as a solution to the political crisis triggered in 2014.

The preference for this solution may have been the political backdrop to the coup attempt. The country's first coalition government elected in 2012 had collapsed, with parliament being suspended for several months. One of the major parties in the collapsed government signed a new alliance with the opposition and within the same month the coup attempt was reported. While there were legitimacy issues to do with the collapse of the governing coalition, there was nothing that

suggested that Ramaphosa treated the attempted coup as an unconstitutional change of government. The elections in February 2015 produced a hung parliament and, just as in 2012, the various parties negotiated coalition alliances. The result was a new government headed by Pakalitha Mosisili, the country's long-serving prime minister until 2012 and leader of the opposition in the 2014 parliament. SADC officially closed the SOMILES mission in Lesotho in April 2015 after what it referred to as "successful elections."<sup>37</sup> Ramaphosa submitted a report to the new government, outlining a number of observations and recommendations for the way forward.

The recommendations were contained in the "Proposal on Constitutional and Institutional Review for the Kingdom of Lesotho" prepared by the SADC facilitating team. But in the months to come, the new government backtracked on all of the SADC decisions agreed prior to the elections, including electoral reforms. As soon as it assumed power, the Mosisili government reinstated Kamoli, and staged a witch-hunt of opponents and dissidents. This included arresting some military officials for an alleged mutiny whose timing coincided with Thabane's prior allegation of a coup attempt in 2014. As part of these arrests, the country's former military chief appointed by Thabane in 2014, Lieutenant-General Maaparankoe Mahao, was killed by his peers in an alleged attempt to arrest him for mutiny. Fifty other soldiers were incarcerated while awaiting trial. Mosisili asked SADC to help establish the circumstances surrounding Mahao's death.<sup>38</sup> SADC appointed a ten-member commission, led by the Botswana High Court Judge Mpaphi Phumaphi, to investigate the full scope of Lesotho's instability. The Mosisili government vehemently rejected the commission's report, and it became a source of diplomatic tension between the government and SADC. It was even challenged in Lesotho's High Court by one of the military top brass allegedly involved in Mahao's killing. In addition, senior government officials bluntly stated that the commission's findings would not be binding, and that the whole endeavor was an exercise in futility.<sup>39</sup>

Led by Botswana as chair, SADC later threatened Lesotho with suspension if it were to refuse to abide by the Commission's recommendations. The recommendations under security reforms were controversial, as they challenged the narrative of both the 2014 coup and the 2015 charges of mutiny under Mosisili, and his reinstatement of Kamoli. The SADC Commission of Inquiry particularly described the latter as a "polarizing character within the Lesotho Defence Force," and recommended his

removal as army chief. The Commission also found no basis for the alleged mutiny, and recommended the immediate release of the incarcerated soldiers.<sup>40</sup> Following months of impasse and standoff between the Lesotho government and SADC, the Lesotho government accepted the Phumaphi recommendations on condition that it would develop its own reforms that would be compatible with Lesotho's laws. Part of the recommendations accepted included reforms to its electoral system, the constitution, security structures, and public service aimed at depoliticizing government administration. On the security front, the government announced Kamoli's retirement and his deputy as the new head of the Lesotho Defence Force.

In March 2017, Mosisili lost a no-confidence vote in parliament. Instead of handing over power to the opposition, he responded by dissolving parliament and calling fresh elections. So, essentially, between receiving the SADC Phumaphi report in 2015 until March 2017, no real reforms had taken place. SADC had papered over Lesotho's security crisis, treating it like a political matter to be handled by the incumbent administration. Thabane won the 2017 elections and for more than two years presided over a fragile coalition government. Somewhat predictably, the government collapsed in 2020, after Thabane became embroiled in a scandal involving the murder of his second wife in 2017 allegedly by his current wife. He was replaced as prime minister by the former finance minister, Moeketsi Majoro.

Ramaphosa's mediation in Lesotho erred in many respects, including on its impartiality, inclusivity, and its ability to address a host of proximate and underlying causes of Lesotho's recurrent conflict. These include deep polarization between the country's political actors, politicized state institutions, and the militarization of politics more broadly. This made the implementation of SADC resolutions both contentious and discretionary. By its own admission, SADC has limited capacity to monitor, evaluate, and ensure implementation of agreements that it helps to broker through mediation. According to the Organ Directorate's 2015 progress report, the implementation of mediation agreements and roadmaps by member states stood at 50 percent. Even more challenging is developing the baseline for these evaluations. The process is also inherently political as it concerns an organizational image, and the need to project publicly some modicum of consensus and progress in fulfilling its peacemaking mandate. This partly explains its claims that it has been successful in mediating

conflicts in Zimbabwe, Madagascar, and Lesotho in the last decade—contrary to existing research pointing to their relapse into violence and conflicts.<sup>41</sup> Arguably, the success it refers to relates exclusively to its facilitation of peace agreements.

### THE POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE SYSTEMIC CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION FRAMEWORK TO SADC MEDIATION

Mediation certainly takes place in extremely complex environments, and its contributions are often multifaceted and difficult to grasp. Plus, the necessary conditions for an SCT framework to be applied to a mediation process by a regional organization may discourage its use. These refer to:

- i. The politics regarding the mandate of the mediator, the time-frames and resources employed;
- ii. the acceptability of non-state actors and partners to the process; and
- iii. the human, institutional, and financial capacities on both sides to implement a transformational peacebuilding agenda.

Yet the application of SCT would not be “re-inventing the wheel.” SADC mediation is essentially geared to building peace, despite the specific mandates given in the different countries. Building peace requires that mediation not become the monopoly of governments, but incorporate the participation of institutions outside of it.

While SADC has a formal mandate to engage in mediation as a form of peacemaking, the experiences of Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Madagascar illustrate the pushback from elite parties in these countries on the exact mandate and responsibilities of the SADC mediator. In both Zimbabwe and Madagascar, the use of “track one” negotiations meant that there was little room for a systemic intervention using other, unofficial tracks of diplomacy. This exacerbated existing divisions within groups on the ground. In Zimbabwe, the relationship between the government and civil society organizations was deeply fragmented. ZANU-PF strongly guarded and monopolized the mediation process, in order to protect and maintain its own version of the conflict. This reflected ZANU-PF’s failure to transform itself from a liberation movement into a political party, including a refusal to acknowledge the roles played by others, such as civil society

organizations (CSOs), students, churches, and other non-state actors in the liberation struggle.<sup>42</sup> As such, the mediation itself became a weak tool of conflict management from the onset, and even less of a tool to transform the relationships and structures that govern those relationships in the longer term. Ultimately, the country experienced a partial, if not pseudo-democratic, transition in 2008 and 2013, and the period thereafter conformed to Galtung's concept of negative peace.

SADC's preference for "track one" diplomacy does not deter it from using other non-official tracks in its mediation processes. While its mediation reflected a more traditional and state-centric approach in Zimbabwe and Madagascar, it later gravitated toward a more hybrid type in Lesotho. This has been described as "track one and a half" diplomacy.<sup>43</sup> It comprises interaction between official representatives of conflicting actors mediated by a third party not representing a political institution. Jeffrey Mapendere finds that it helps address some deficiencies of "track one" diplomacy, and directly influences power structures without being driven by governmental political agendas.<sup>44</sup> In all three cases, agreements were facilitated without a fundamental transformation of relationships for purely pragmatic reasons. There was no stated transition from mediation to post-conflict processes, and the agreements were left to self-implementation. This changed somewhat for Lesotho when SADC set up a commission of inquiry to help facilitate long-term transformation as understood by many. The snag, however, was that the viability of the process was subject to the executive control of that country.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Increase utilization of Systemic Conflict Transformation in the SADC region.** The Systemic Conflict Transformation (SCT) approach is consistent with the Southern African Development Community's broader peacemaking mandate and thus could be an effective means for conflict transformation in the region. Mediation that is geared to building peace inevitably requires the transformation of society at all levels. SCT emphasizes the importance of engaging civil society in an effective way, parallel and integral to a peace process. It should be understood as part of mediation from the beginning and be initiated at some point.
- 2. Move beyond "track one" diplomacy.** The primacy attached to track one negotiations can squeeze out potentially more effective tracks

of diplomacy. Countries have numerously invoked domestic jurisdiction over SADC processes, or lament SADC's involvement in their affairs as intrusions on sovereignty. Over-investment in a single SADC mediator can amplify pushback from elite parties in these countries on the exact mandate and responsibilities.

3. *Develop a framework for engaging non-state actors.* SADC needs an explicit, consolidated policy framework for engaging non-state actors in its peace and security affairs. What currently exists is a relatively defunct memorandum of understanding between SADC and the regional umbrella body for NGOs—the SADC Council of NGOs—signed in 2008. Modalities for involving NGOs in SADC mediation are not yet clear, but these could take the form of ad hoc arrangements, loosely defined collaborations or even superficial consultations. Ultimately, the future relevance of SADC's mediation structure lies in its capacity as a strategic policy advisory and technical tool for supporting SADC to detect conflicts, prevent and manage them, and help countries implement agreements to consolidate peace.

## NOTES

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## CHAPTER 14

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# The International Criminal Court's Impact on Peacebuilding in Africa

*Phil Clark*

## INTRODUCTION

The International Criminal Court (ICC), the first permanent, global institution mandated to investigate and prosecute cases of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, has transformed the African peace-building terrain since it came into force in 2002. Over the last 17 years, the ICC has generated considerable controversy, including criticism of its impact on peace processes in Africa, the continent that—except for the 2016 opening of ICC investigations into the Russia/Georgia conflict—has provided all of the Court’s situations to date. Concerns over the effect of international criminal justice on African peace and reconciliation initiatives are not new, having arisen with two previous institutions, the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL).<sup>1</sup> This issue is more acute with the ICC, however, because its temporal mandate, which limits the Court to investigating and prosecuting cases after July 1, 2002, increases the likelihood

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of the Court intervening in situations of ongoing conflict and intersecting with a wide range of conflict mitigation processes.

This chapter examines the ICC's intersections with two widespread domestic conflict resolution processes in Africa, national amnesties and peace negotiations. In doing so, it connects to two overarching scholarly and policy debates, namely the appropriateness and legality of amnesties as opposed to prosecutions for suspected perpetrators of international crimes,<sup>2</sup> and the "peace versus justice" debate over whether the threat of prosecution imperils peace negotiations that involve high-level atrocity suspects.<sup>3</sup> These issues coincided during the Juba peace talks between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels, starting in 2006, one year after the ICC issued arrest warrants for the top five LRA commanders while a national amnesty for all rebel combatants was still in place. The tensions around Juba ignited the entire fields of transitional justice and peacebuilding, as witnessed in the landmark "Building a Future on Peace and Justice" conference in Nuremberg in June 2007.<sup>4</sup> The event was held at the height of the Juba talks amid calls for the deferral or withdrawal of the ICC charges against the LRA leadership for the sake of peace. The conference was attended by the ICC Prosecutor, Registrar, and other senior Court officials, who used it as a platform to pronounce on developments in Juba.<sup>5</sup> This included the lament by the ICC's inaugural chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo that "we...hear officials of States Parties calling for amnesties, the granting of immunities and other ways to avoid prosecutions, supposedly in the name of peace."<sup>6</sup>

This chapter argues that the ICC has generally ridden roughshod over national choices to employ amnesties to facilitate peace negotiations and other responses to violence across Africa, including security sector reform (SSR), disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and truth commissions. The ICC's and its supporters' vehement insistence on a narrow brand of international criminal justice has undermined these important attempts to resolve conflict and often made peace less, rather than more, likely. This chapter focuses on the ICC's first two—and therefore most developed—situations in northern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with secondary reference to Rwanda, South Sudan, and other conflict-affected states in Africa. The Uganda and DRC situations, analyzed sequentially below in sections dedicated to domestic amnesties and peace negotiations, highlight a range of ICC-induced problems for peacebuilding in African states. The chapter concludes with some lessons from the ICC's interventions for recrafting international criminal justice in support of the wider pursuit of peace.

## DOMESTIC AMNESTIES

International criminal law is now a central feature of most peace negotiations around the world, especially those involving United Nations (UN) mediation. The UN increasingly holds that international law prohibits the use of amnesties for suspects of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity and therefore insists on prosecutions within the framework of peace negotiations.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the ICC has regularly briefed international mediators about the illegality of using amnesties for this category of suspects during peace talks.<sup>8</sup> This signifies a substantial shift since the 1998 conference in Rome that led to the signing of the ICC Statute, where many delegates expressed sympathy for the model of amnesty central to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was underway at the time.<sup>9</sup> Philippe Kirsch, the chair of the Preparatory Commission in Rome and later the first President of the ICC, stated that the Rome Statute purposely contains a “creative ambiguity”<sup>10</sup> that gives substantial discretion when considering amnesties.<sup>11</sup>

As various commentators have pointed out, international criminal law does not clearly prohibit the use of amnesties for serious crimes.<sup>12</sup> The Rome Statute does not mention amnesties, although the ICC’s definition of the “genuine proceedings” by domestic institutions that would prevent ICC intervention encompasses only national prosecutions. Other international criminal law statutes and conventions meanwhile are less prescriptive or say very little about this issue. This suggests that the international legal basis for the trend against amnesties is significantly weaker than many advocates have proposed, necessitating a different set of justifications by the UN and other international practitioners for their anti-amnesty stance. Various scholars also challenge the widespread assumption that international trials inherently deter crimes and produce long-term stability and that amnesties foster impunity and ultimately undermine peace and social order.<sup>13</sup>

### *Domestic Amnesties in Uganda*

The Uganda and DRC situations highlight various ways in which the ICC has undermined national amnesties and, by extension, a range of DDR and SSR programs that depend on incentivizing combatants’ cooperation through the offer of amnesties. From the beginning of its operations

in Uganda, the ICC opposed the use of the country's Amnesty Act for high-level suspects of international crimes on the grounds that it violated the Rome Statute and entrenched impunity. This opposition reached a crescendo during the 2006–2008 Juba peace talks, where the ICC Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) issued regular dismissals of the LRA's attempts to secure an amnesty for its leaders, amplified by a constant stream of press releases and communiqués by international human rights organizations.<sup>14</sup> This section argues that the pronouncements by the ICC and its supporters belied the long-term use of amnesties in Uganda even before the emergence of the LRA; the widespread support for the Amnesty Act among everyday Ugandans, including its use for senior LRA commanders; and the tangible, positive effects of the amnesty policy.

The Amnesty Act stemmed from lobbying by the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) during the 1999 peace talks between the Ugandan government, the LRA and the LRA's principal backer, the Sudanese government. The ARLPI conducted widespread consultations with northern victims' groups and concluded there was a strong desire among the population for personal and collective healing and reconciliation with the rebels.<sup>15</sup>

The impact of the Ugandan amnesty process has been substantial. To date, approximately 30,000 rebels have come in from the bush under the DDR process facilitated by the amnesty, including senior LRA commanders such as Brigadier Kenneth Banya and Brigadier Sam Kolo.<sup>16</sup> Because of the quantifiable impact of the amnesty process, various empirical studies highlight widespread popular support for the policy.<sup>17</sup> In 2012, the Ugandan government let the Amnesty Act lapse for the first time since its promulgation but sustained pressure from northern Ugandan civil society forced the government to reinstate the Act in 2013.<sup>18</sup>

The ICC's and its supporters' opposition to the Amnesty Act is highly problematic for two main reasons. First, these actors ignore the substantial support for the Act among everyday Ugandans. In the late 1980s and 1990s, there was considerable support for amnesty processes because of their success in disarming and reintegrating the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA) and the Uganda People's Army (UPA) in 1987,<sup>19</sup> and the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) in 1998.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, as highlighted in a 2007 study by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), widespread approval for processes of amnesty, forgiveness, and reconciliation (which most respondents define

discretely) emerges because many northern Ugandans view the perpetrators of violence as their own children who must be treated leniently and eventually reintegrated into the community.<sup>21</sup> This often extends to LRA leaders such as Kony, whom many northern Ugandans consider a “child of the community” who should be encouraged through the amnesty process to halt the rebellion and return “home.”<sup>22</sup> The Uganda case thus directly challenges the oft-stated view that the use of amnesty hampers a long-term transition toward democracy. Uganda represents an example of a democratic amnesty, which resulted from civil society lobbying and widespread popular consultations, rather than government diktat. International opposition to such a democratic amnesty may therefore undermine democracy in the long run.

Second, the confusion over the applicability of the Amnesty Act—whether the amnesty is still in place and to whom it applies—generated both by the ICC and the Ugandan government (which has responded to donor pressure to shift toward a more legalistic, punitive framework for transitional justice)<sup>23</sup> has greatly undermined the Act’s effectiveness in catalyzing the DDR of LRA and other rebel combatants. The Ugandan Amnesty Commission and various civil society groups have reported over the last decade the substantial reduction in combatants returning from the bush under the Amnesty Act, which they attribute directly to the perceived threat of prosecution.<sup>24</sup> This highlights the ICC’s and Ugandan government’s tangible undermining of DDR as a peacebuilding process, through their continued opposition to the use of amnesties for rebel combatants.

### *Domestic Amnesties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*

The DRC has instituted a much wider range of amnesty processes than Uganda for a broader set of purposes. Whereas Uganda has used a single Amnesty Act, connected to an overarching DDR process for returning rebels, the DRC has passed four amnesty laws since 2002, linked explicitly to a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) and an SSR program involving the *brassage* or “mixing” of former rebels into the national Congolese army. Concurrent to these DRC amnesty laws, an implicit amnesty policy has supported an extensive DDR program for Congo-based Rwandan rebels. Three phases of DDR since 1998 have demobilized around 35,000 mainly Hutu former combatants from

eastern DRC. The majority of these fighters are members of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the former Rwandan army which fled across the border after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.<sup>25</sup>

Two important problems regarding the ICC and amnesties have emerged in the DRC. First, echoing the Ugandan situation, the Congolese government's variability on the use of amnesties—under pressure from the ICC and international human rights organizations—has weakened their effectiveness as a peacebuilding tool. Generally, the Congolese government has displayed a much greater readiness to give amnesties to senior military and rebel leaders as part of the country's SSR program than implied by its self-portrayal as an unyielding friend of international justice.<sup>26</sup> Acting outside of the 2005 amnesty law, in 2006 the then-President Joseph Kabilo pardoned Mathieu Ngudjolo and all 10,000 members of his Ituri rebel coalition, the *Mouvement Révolutionnaire Congolais* (MRC), as well as the rebel groups led by Peter Karim and Cobra Matata, in exchange for their surrender, the decommissioning of their weapons, and their integration into the Congolese army.<sup>27</sup> As a result, all three leaders were promoted to the rank of colonel.

Such a practice was common in the lead-up to the 2006 national elections, as the government sought to minimize the impact of militia groups capable of intimidating voters and disrupting preparations for the poll. The UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC)<sup>28</sup> supported the scheme as part of the UN's broader disarmament program in eastern DRC. Kemal Saiki, a MONUC spokesperson, defended the amnesty-for-peace deals with Ngudjolo, Karim, and Matata: “The most important thing is to bring an end to the bloodshed. Since these deals have been signed, there has not been any large-scale fighting in Ituri.”<sup>29</sup>

The Congolese government's ambiguity on questions of amnesty continued when in February 2008 it arrested Ngudjolo at a military training camp in Kinshasa following an ICC warrant issued in July 2007. This amounted to a “bait and switch,” with Ngudjolo lured into surrender from his rebel ranks and integrated into the Congolese army, only to be arrested and transferred to The Hague for prosecution 18 months later. While the Congolese government was widely hailed for its cooperation in arresting and transferring Ngudjolo to the ICC, its duplicity toward an amnesty recipient undermined the broader use of

amnesty as an incentive for members of rebel groups to disarm.<sup>30</sup> Interviews with former rebels from Ngudjolo's FNI and FRPI in Bunia who had been integrated into the Congolese army underscored this point. "This is the big problem with *brassage*," said one former FNI combatant: "The government gives us an amnesty, so we join the army and get a new uniform. But look what happened to Ngudjolo. He also got an amnesty but now he's in The Hague. We all wonder whether this will happen to us next."<sup>31</sup>

Second, the ICC's interventions in the DRC potentially weaken the unofficial amnesty that underpins the extensive DDR program, which has demobilized and returned tens of thousands of rebels to Rwanda. This could have jeopardized the ICC's case against Bosco Ntaganda, a Rwandan-born former Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) officer who in July 2019 was convicted by the ICC on 18 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>32</sup> As a Rwandan national, Ntaganda—who in 2013 surrendered to the ICC via the US embassy in Kigali—could have been eligible to participate in the DDR process and thus avoid prosecution by the Rwandan authorities.

The complications inherent in the Ntaganda case again highlight the potential for fraught relations between the ICC and, in this case, a UN-supported DDR process. A key challenge for the UN and other international bodies across Africa is that many support amnesty-based SSR and DDR as well as the ICC, highlighting a problem for peace mediators and related actors in navigating the new peacebuilding terrain since the advent of the Court. Similar sentiments to those of the former Nationalist and Integrationist Front (FNI) and Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri (FRPI) rebels above were expressed by former Congo-based rebels in the Mutobo demobilization center in Rwanda. As one young FDLR combatant said, "We heard what happened to Bosco. He was bigger than us and did the same as we did, coming across the border. Now he's at the ICC. Is that going to happen to us too?"<sup>33</sup>

The Uganda and DRC situations highlight the ICC's outright dismissal of national decisions to employ amnesties as a central means of conflict resolution. While the two governments in question have adopted deliberately ambiguous policies on amnesties—at times persisting with them even while cooperating with ICC investigations—amnesties have continued to be highly effective in encouraging combatants to lay down their arms and to reintegrate into their home communities. The ICC has insisted on international prosecutions while viewing amnesties as a

means to entrench impunity, despite their long track record as effective tools of conflict mitigation, especially in terms of DDR in Uganda and the DRC. The Ugandan and Congolese experiences also highlight that the ICC's decision to overrule domestic amnesties in the cases of high-ranking suspects has dampened the effectiveness of amnesties for lower-ranking combatants, who often believe they too will be subject to criminal prosecution.

## PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

This section analyzes the ICC's intersections with peace negotiations in Uganda and the DRC, which have invariably involved the fraught issue of whether to offer amnesties to high-ranking atrocity suspects. Three brief conceptual remarks are necessary to progress the “peace versus justice” debate that has dominated recent scholarly and policy discussions and to inform the empirical analysis below. First, a more helpful framing of the intersections of international justice and peace talks comes from Nick Grono and Adam O’Brien, who argue that the objectives of justice and peace, while not necessarily incompatible, are inevitably in tension.<sup>34</sup> This counters the claim by numerous ICC officials and observers that peace and justice are always mutually reinforcing.<sup>35</sup> Grono and O’Brien acknowledge the possibility of pursuing peace and justice sequentially but stress that some trade-off will probably be required, depending on the circumstances of particular conflict-affected societies and the nature of the proposed justice and peace interventions.

Second, it is important to recognize that what is being debated in situations such as Uganda and the DRC is rarely whether peace or justice are the desired outcomes—few actors would contest the necessity of both—but rather whether negotiations or prosecutions are the preferred processes by which to achieve these ends. A “negotiations versus prosecutions” formulation has the advantage of not preempting the result of particular mechanisms, while remaining open to the likelihood that such processes may have multiple (and even unexpected) outcomes. The “peace versus justice” debate assumes that peace negotiations produce peace and prosecutions produce justice, neither of which inherently holds. Peace talks can fail to achieve peace, just as trials can fail to achieve justice. Peace negotiations can also, if tailored in particular ways, pursue certain conceptions of justice that preclude prosecutions

(including through conditional amnesties), while prosecutions can, if approached in contextually sensitive ways, contribute to peace.

Third, when analyzing the nature and impact of negotiations and prosecutions as processes, it is necessary to move beyond a fixation on the set-pieces of formal peace talks and criminal trials. A range of processes preceding, during, and following formal negotiations, as well as the prevailing environment in which they take place, are vital for understanding the impact that prosecutions have on negotiations and vice versa. Similarly, understanding the nature and effects of prosecutions involves more than an analysis of core legal practices such as investigations, court-room arguments, and judgments. This also requires a close examination of the political, social, cultural, and economic context in which these legal processes unfold and their intersections with a wide range of other actors and mechanisms, including the national amnesty policies discussed above.

### *Peace Negotiations in Uganda*

A central theme in the contestation over the Juba peace talks between the Ugandan government and the LRA is the role of the ICC in pushing the LRA to negotiate for peace. Various senior ICC officials and academic commentators have argued that without the threat of ICC prosecution, the LRA would never have considered negotiating with the Ugandan government.<sup>36</sup> This argument is unconvincing in two key respects. The 2005 signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which greatly weakened the LRA by threatening its bases in southern Sudan, occurred nine months before the ICC issued arrest warrants for the LRA leadership. While some LRA attacks continued in late 2005, the group's scope for violence was clearly curtailed by the CPA and the subsequent joint counterinsurgency against the rebels. As Ron Atkinson argues, the signing of the CPA pushed the LRA toward peace talks by forcing the Sudanese government to halt its support for the LRA, dispersing the LRA from its bases, and compelling the newly autonomous Government of South Sudan to deal with "foreign forces" including the LRA. This provided the grounds for the clandestine talks between the SPLM and the LRA that led to the Juba negotiations in 2006.<sup>37</sup>

Concerning the Juba talks themselves, debates center on whether blame for the collapse of the negotiations in 2008 should ultimately rest with the ICC. Such a perspective is widespread among many northern

Ugandan civil society and community-level actors as well as in the commentary on the Juba talks.<sup>38</sup> From the start of the talks in July 2006, foremost among the LRA's demands was the withdrawal of the ICC arrest warrants against its commanders, allowing them to take up the government's amnesty, participate in cleansing and reintegration rituals in northern Uganda and, according to some observers, secure exile in southern Sudan or elsewhere.<sup>39</sup> The LRA's demand proved highly controversial, and the ICC stated shortly after that it would not withdraw the arrest warrants.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, the government—that had initially backed the LRA's request—then claimed to support the ICC's refusal to grant it.<sup>41</sup>

Blaming the ICC solely for the breakdown in the Juba talks ignores the fact that the negotiations lasted two full years and led to the agreements on a range of highly contentious issues, all while the ICC warrants hung over the LRA leadership. This included the signing of the comprehensive political solutions agreement on May 2, 2007, providing a roadmap for addressing the root causes of the LRA rebellion; the accountability and reconciliation agreement signed on June 29, 2007, with an implementation protocol signed on February 19, 2008; the agreement on a permanent ceasefire signed on February 23, 2008; and the agreement on DDR signed on February 29, 2008. The final peace agreement which brought together all of the aforementioned agreements, however, was never signed, meaning these protocols could never be fully implemented.<sup>42</sup> These important agreements counter the claim by Mark Kersten and others that the Government and the LRA never took the talks seriously.<sup>43</sup>

The ICC's intervention nevertheless weakened the Juba process from the outset. A structural effect of the ICC warrants was the fact that none of the five LRA commanders charged by the Court—including Vincent Otti, who had displayed an openness to negotiation during a previous process with former Ugandan government minister Betty Bigombe<sup>44</sup>—could lead the rebel delegation in Juba. Of the fifteen LRA delegates sent to Juba, only two, Colonel Lubwe Bwone and Lieutenant Colonel Santo Alit, were active commanders and had been present at failed LRA-Government peace talks in 2004, thus bringing critical experience to the Juba process. A source of constant frustration for the mediation and advisory team to the talks was uncertainty over whether the LRA delegation spoke legitimately on behalf of the leadership in the bush and had the

authority to enact the agreements signed in Juba, including the cessation to hostilities.<sup>45</sup>

The ICC warrants also fundamentally shaped the tenor and substance of the Juba negotiations. During and after the two-year process, the LRA said repeatedly that it would neither sign the remaining sections of the final agreement nor countenance laying down its arms and demobilizing its forces until the ICC warrants were withdrawn.<sup>46</sup> Especially in the early stages of the talks, the issue of the arrest warrants was a major distraction to the five-point agenda. The first 18 months of the talks, particularly on the third agenda item of accountability and reconciliation, were dominated by discussions over modalities for removing the warrants or at least pausing the ICC investigations for one year, renewable under Article 16 of the Rome Statute. The UN and other international actors with access to the Juba negotiators stressed consistently that the Amnesty Act could not legally apply to the LRA commanders. This view caused anger among the LRA delegation and the Acholi civil society leadership that traveled to Juba. It also curtailed the mediators' flexibility in seeking common ground between the parties.<sup>47</sup>

Throughout the Juba process, the ICC intervened acerbically with a series of public statements, supported by various UN agencies and international human rights organizations, stating that the ICC arrest warrants must be enacted.<sup>48</sup> These international interventions raised the temperature of the negotiations, framing various LRA proposals solely as attempts to extricate its leadership from the ICC warrants, and pressured all of the parties to narrow the parameters of substantive discussion. This amounted to significant over-reach by the ICC and its supporters and tainted the atmosphere and content of the Juba talks.<sup>49</sup> The barbed statements by the ICC Prosecutor and other senior Court officials—particularly as the third agenda item on accountability and reconciliation was being discussed in 2007—complicated the mediators' task.<sup>50</sup> Similar issues have arisen in other African peace negotiations conducted during ICC investigations and prosecutions, including the 2011 Doha talks between the Sudanese government and seven Darfuri rebel groups, in which amnesties were a central issue.<sup>51</sup> While the Court was never the principal actor in catalyzing or undermining peace negotiations, it greatly stymied attempts to peacefully resolve the conflict between the LRA and the government.

*Peace Negotiations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*

Since the ICC launched investigations in the DRC in June 2004, the Court has overlapped with three major peace processes in which amnesty issues featured prominently: a series of informal peace negotiations with rebel groups mediated by the president of the Congolese TRC, Rev. Jean-Luc Kuye, in 2005 and 2006; the 2008 Goma talks which concerned primarily the CNDP rebel group; and the 2013 Kampala talks, focused on the M23 rebellion. The ICC affected each of these processes differently, echoing some features of the Uganda case while diverging in several important ways.

First, the Congolese TRC incorporated an important element of peace mediation and negotiation. Article 5 of the TRC Statute broadened the commission's mandate to include active conflict resolution, described as "the prevention or management of conflicts as they occur through mediation between divided communities."<sup>52</sup> Kuye and several TRC commissioners attempted to resolve conflict by traveling to Kisangani, Bukavu, Goma, Rutshuru, and elsewhere to talk to protagonists.<sup>53</sup>

Kuye argued that the ICC hampered the TRC's efforts because belligerents refused to confess to crimes or to cooperate with mediators for fear of evidence being used against them in criminal trials, either through the ICC or the domestic courts. "The ICC came up forcefully in our discussions with several rebel leaders, including [CNDP leader Laurent] Nkunda," Kuye said. "We would start talking to them, make good progress, then the conversation would stop. They didn't want to incriminate themselves, even when we stressed that the amnesty was in place."<sup>54</sup> This situation echoes challenges in other countries such as Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste that have simultaneously deployed trials and truth commissions. As various commentators have argued, the threat of prosecutions in such cases often deters even lower-ranking actors from appearing before truth commissions.<sup>55</sup>

In January 2008, the Goma peace talks between the Congolese government and 22 rebel groups—but centering on the CNDP—began to show the more direct influence of the ICC, including flow-on effects from the concurrent Ugandan peace talks. The ICC had little impact on the government or rebel parties in Goma but influenced substantially the work of the international mediators. The CNDP pressed hard for a blanket amnesty that would include charges of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, arguing that the 2005 amnesty law

was too restrictive in this regard.<sup>56</sup> Several observers who interviewed the European Union (EU) and other international mediators in Goma, however, underline the “invisible presence”<sup>57</sup> of the ICC over the negotiations, principally on the legality of amnesties for international crimes. In particular, the mediators wanted to avoid the heated contestation over amnesties and international prosecutions that dominated the Ugandan peace talks.<sup>58</sup>

The UN, however, found itself in a more complicated position, having supported through MONUC the use of blanket amnesties for the Ituri rebel leaders in 2006, discussed in the previous section, while supporting the EU opposition to amnesties for international crimes during the Goma process. Tatiana Carayannis observes that the UN found it an “embarrassment” that the final Goma agreement involved a peace deal with CNDP deputy leader, Bosco Ntaganda.<sup>59</sup> At the time of the Goma talks, a sealed ICC arrest warrant for Ntaganda was in place (issued on August 22, 2006, it was unsealed soon after the Goma talks on April 28, 2008).<sup>60</sup> Laura Davis argues that rumors of the ICC warrant against Ntaganda abounded in Goma and reinforced the EU’s and UN’s stringent opposition to amnesties for international crimes. They did not want to jeopardize possible ICC moves against Ntaganda in the way that they perceived the Ugandan Amnesty Act to have done in the ICC cases against the LRA leaders.<sup>61</sup>

Throughout 2013, the Kampala peace talks between the Congolese government and the M23 rebels—precipitated by the M23 capture of Goma in November 2012—again showed the important influence of the ICC. Echoing the 2008 Goma talks between the Congolese government and the M23’s predecessor organization, the CNDP, the rebel leaders pressed hard for a blanket amnesty that would cover international crimes as well as a favorable reintegration into the Congolese army. The parties refused to sign a joint agreement and instead issued two separate declarations in Nairobi in December 2013. As a result of the talks, an amnesty law was passed in January 2014 that covered “insurrectional acts” but not genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity. Only 29 M23 fighters were granted amnesty under the law, while the Congolese government deemed 78 M23 members ineligible for reintegration into the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and issued arrest warrants for 19 M23 officials at large in Rwanda and Uganda.<sup>62</sup>

Taken together, these three peace processes—the TRC dialogues in 2005–2006, the Goma talks in 2008 and the Kampala talks in 2013—highlight the various ways in which the ICC has often discouraged conflict actors to see dialogue as a means for peace and pushed mediators to eschew amnesties, even if these represent important incentives to bring belligerents to the negotiating table. These peace negotiations also underscore the variability of the UN, the Congolese government, and other important actors on whether prosecutions, as opposed to dialogue or the offer of amnesties, represent the most effective responses to mass crimes.

## CONCLUSION

Viewed side by side, the Ugandan and DRC cases highlight the crucial but diverse ways in which the ICC impinges on national amnesties and peace processes. Throughout peace negotiations in the two countries, the ICC was one—but never the decisive—barrier to peace, often exacerbating more fundamental challenges. That the Ugandan and Congolese governments, the UN and other international bodies that ostensibly support the ICC so regularly advocate the use of amnesties—when confronted with the need to facilitate peace talks, DDR, SSR, and truth commissions—shows the continued utility of amnesty as a means to resolve mass conflict. While the ICC has rendered the Rome Statute an unavoidable touchstone in debates over amnesty and the conduct of peace talks today, these actors are reluctant to jettison amnesty entirely and to fully embrace international prosecutions. Meanwhile, the Court’s attempts to influence peace negotiations and strident opposition to amnesties—seen most vividly during the Juba talks—risk alienating actors who are directly embroiled in attempts to mitigate conflict and do not have the luxury of ignoring context and consequences.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

International policymakers and practitioners should respond in several ways to these problems produced by the ICC.

1. ***Reassess and reorient prohibitions against amnesties.*** The routinely stated prohibition against amnesties for high-level atrocity perpetrators—and the prosecutions-at-all-costs approach this entails—reflects neither international law, as it currently holds, nor the

practice of the UN and many domestic governments in Africa. There should be more explicit recognition that many of the processes favored by the UN and other international actors to resolve mass conflict, including DDR and SSR, depend on offering amnesties to combatants in exchange for their cooperation. As highlighted above, the stance by the ICC and many of its supporters that amnesties are permissible for low-level perpetrators but must be prohibited for high-ranking perpetrators belies the empirical reality that the latter also disincentivizes many low-level actors from accepting amnesties and participating in processes such as DDR and SSR. International actors must therefore refrain from anti-amnesty rhetoric and advocate instead flexibility and context-specific responses to mass crimes. This may, under certain circumstances, include prosecutions but should equally allow principled discussion over the use of conditional amnesties and other lenient forms of accountability that promote peacebuilding. One key effect of the ICC's intervention in African conflict zones over the last 15 years has been the narrowing of potential remedies available to African actors in seeking the sustainable resolution of mass conflicts. This has denied peace negotiators and other conflict mitigators the flexibility necessary to incentivize belligerents to lay down their arms and to formulate responses that address the complex causes of violence in the long term.

2. *Reinforce the role of local actors.* As part of this reorientation, international actors must also reinforce the role of local actors—domestic policymakers, civil society, and affected communities—in determining the most context-appropriate and effective means to accountability and peace. Many domestic mediators during peace talks in Uganda and the DRC expressed a sense of powerlessness in the face of external insistence on ICC prosecutions. The experiences of Uganda, the DRC, and other African states highlight the overly controlling nature of international intervention—including the over-reach of the ICC into delicate domestic peace processes—and the need for much greater dedication to domestic ownership. The precise contribution of the ICC to peacebuilding efforts across Africa has been often stated but rarely proven. What is much clearer is the ICC's track record of interfering directly in key processes of conflict mitigation—namely amnesties, peace talks, DDR, SSR, and truth commissions—with the net result that, over the last

17 years, the Court has made peace across Africa much tougher to achieve. The task for the ICC and international actors now is to tailor the Court's work more directly to the pursuit of peace, while minimizing its capacity to undermine other vital peacebuilding efforts.

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## CHAPTER 15

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# Humanitarian Action and Peacebuilding: Incompatible or Complementary?

*Jens Pedersen*

## INTRODUCTION

### *Origins of Humanitarian Action*

Humanitarian action and humanitarianism, in general, are typically considered to be part of the evolution of Western thought and have their historical foundation in 19th century European and subsequently North American conflicts. In response to the horrors of these wars, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Geneva Conventions were established (1863 and 1864). Vital features of humanitarianism are not, however, exclusive to, nor advanced only in Western conflicts. For example, the duty of assisting others is prevalent in the Sakhat tradition of Islam, as it is in the laws set down in fifth-century Chinese literature.<sup>1</sup>

That said, humanitarianism within an international context has, broadly speaking, gone through several phases:

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This chapter represents the personal views of the author.

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- i. From the mid-nineteenth century until the end of the First World War;
- ii. the subsequent period stretching until the end of the Second World War, during which key international organizations were shaped;
- iii. the Cold War period, which witnessed the institutionalization of development and humanitarian aid; and
- iv. the current, post-Cold War period, often referred to as a “golden period” or “neo-humanitarianism,” where political ideologies changed and altered the landscape of humanitarian aid.<sup>2</sup>

Humanitarian aid is founded on four key principles: humanity, independence, neutrality, and impartiality. Organizations that generally fall under the “humanitarian” category give different weight to each principle depending on their history, character, and mandate.<sup>3</sup> The ICRC and *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF), for instance, focus primarily on medical care.<sup>4</sup> Other humanitarian organizations operate across a range of activities such as education, water, sanitation, nutrition, and food security, often at the same time. The primary objective that they all have in common as humanitarian organizations is to save lives and alleviate suffering.<sup>5</sup>

Nearly all humanitarian organizations are “self-mandated;” that is, in law and practice, they are non-governmental, private organizations. The major exception is the ICRC, which is the only humanitarian organization with a clear international legal foundation and status enshrined in the Geneva Conventions.<sup>6</sup>

In recent decades, international institutions and donor countries have responded to changing international and geopolitical dynamics by seeking to merge humanitarian aid with development aid. The latter is usually aimed at reducing poverty and supporting “development”—in many guises—in accordance with liberal ideas about how poor and/or conflict-ridden countries can become prosperous and stable.<sup>7</sup> A host of different issues—from state-building and forced migration to counter-terrorism and reconciliation—have now fallen into what might be called the “humanitarian-development nexus.”<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, there has been a proliferation of so-called “multi-mandated organizations,” undertaking a variety of different tasks funded by donors. These organizations tend to be less focused on populations—*saving lives and alleviating suffering*—than institutions. Increasingly, they operate in collaboration with governments—donors and donor recipients—as well as other actors, including militaries, broadly seeking the same goals.<sup>9</sup>

That the founding principles and objectives of humanitarian aid are under strain in today's conflict/post-conflict zones is beyond doubt. Nowhere is this more evident than in Africa, where peacebuilding efforts occur on an increasingly complex and contested terrain.

## MANDATE SHIFT IN AFRICA

Peacebuilding is often defined as one phase or sequence in a long-term process for states affected by conflict, which also comprises stability, peace support, or peacekeeping operations and, latterly, state-building.<sup>10</sup> More loosely applied, “peacebuilding” is also used to describe the process as a whole, which in the African context has proved especially problematic in recent decades, as it often melds into the concepts of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. The funders of peacekeeping missions generally hold that a strong state with strong institutions is desirable, since a strong state is seen to be more resilient against threats of insurgency and terror.<sup>11</sup> For humanitarian organizations, the changing nature of peacekeeping missions has often put them in an invidious position, challenging their founding principles.

The United Nations' (UN) failure to protect civilians caught up in intra-state conflict in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, as well as a stronger push from UN member states for missions to contribute more to improving state institutions, spurred major doctrinal changes in peacekeeping worldwide.<sup>12</sup> The Brahimi Report reflected this shift, with a call for stronger peacekeeping missions with expanded mandates, going beyond the hitherto “self-defense” threshold of the use of force, to allow forces to “use all means necessary to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.”<sup>13</sup> The concept of “protection of civilians” was thus born and doctrinally further developed to become an integral part of multilateral peacekeeping missions in Africa.

Two additional characteristics of the shift in Africa are noteworthy: the increasingly integrated role of UN missions to blend political, human rights, humanitarian, and ultimately, statebuilding components into their function; and, more recently, multilateral peacekeeping missions that take on offensive roles that include counterinsurgency operations, and, in some contexts, counterterrorism activities.<sup>14</sup>

## THE HUMANITARIAN BIND

Historically, and principally, humanitarian action is underpinned by the legal principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). IHL as a part of the Geneva Conventions has for decades sought to regulate the conduct of armed conflict including but not limited to, combatants right to health care when wounded or sick, the right of humanitarian actors to access populations in conflict-affected areas, and the rights of the very same populations to receive assistance.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most significant shift in humanitarian action, effected by the above changes in peacebuilding, is the emergence of what is often referred to as “humanitarian intervention.”<sup>16</sup> The blending of humanitarian and military-political interventions was spurred by doctrines such as Responsibility to Protect (R2P)<sup>17</sup> as well as a practice of the UN approving several military interventions defined as “humanitarian” with or without UN Security Council approval. The legal foundation on which these decisions are made has been questioned, with critics variously arguing that the interventions are mere “window dressing” for imperial interests or essentially flawed, due to their selective application.<sup>18</sup>

The terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, proved a turning point for humanitarian action, as with so much else. In the subsequent US-driven paradigm of the “war on terror,” the principles underpinning humanitarian action were usurped and utilized for military and political gains, as new conflict dynamics took hold.<sup>19</sup> No longer simply a pretext for interventions, humanitarian action and aid frequently became a tool to garner popular support in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism contexts. The new era, exemplified by then-U.S. President George W. Bush’s warning to other states and actors that “either you are with us or against us,” would see NGOs described as “force multipliers” by no less than his Secretary of State, Colin Powell. This recasting severely undermined the principles and morality of IHL, and saw humanitarian aid incorporated into the “politico-military toolbox.”<sup>20</sup>

With the fight against “terrorist” states or non-state actors pitched in stark, Manichean terms, and all forms of aid viewed as tools to win hearts and minds,<sup>21</sup> traditional humanitarian actors were either sidelined or co-opted. Their scope to provide assistance was also curtailed. Humanitarians found it difficult to engage and provide humanitarian aid to populations in areas which required guarantees and consent from non-state actors or

areas in which foreign forces were conducting counterinsurgency operations.<sup>22</sup> Such conflict areas include Somalia, Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Mozambique, to name a few.

The various actors involved in both peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Africa today have all, in different ways—unwittingly or not—contributed to the undermining of the principled provision of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian actors have always had to contend with competing interests in the spaces in which they operate. What is new, besides altered conflict dynamics and changes to peacekeeping practice, is the introduction of new legislative frameworks that seek to strengthen the hand of states in counterterrorism contexts.<sup>23</sup> The advent and development of increasingly restrictive counterterrorism legislation, both internationally and domestically in many countries, adds a further layer of complexity to the potential of safeguarding IHL in conflict areas.<sup>24</sup> This sort of legislation often seeks to outlaw armed combatants and alienate potential areas they may control, which often results in entire communities being placed in legal limbo. Frequently, as in other areas of conflict, these communities may require humanitarian assistance, even more so when located in areas outside of state control. Importantly, who controls the particular area is often not decided by the resident population. Humanitarian agencies seeking to assist these communities face a legal risk due to legislation that effectively prevents any potential support reaching outlawed armed groups or communities.<sup>25</sup> So, humanitarians are denied access to needy areas outside of state control and denied the opportunity to engage populations and armed groups.<sup>26</sup> And when funding for humanitarian aid is contingent upon winning hearts and minds, they are compromised. This is all a far cry from humanitarians being able to assist all populations in need, irrespective of whether they might find themselves on the wrong side of an ideological or political fault line that invokes the language of insurgency or terrorism.<sup>27</sup>

It is against this historical and political backdrop that contemporary humanitarian aid's role in a number of peacebuilding case studies in Africa is analyzed below. Modern peacekeeping in Africa has morphed into a function of political objectives,<sup>28</sup> yet increasingly these aims are at odds with the legal and foundational principles of humanitarian aid. Through the following examples, the case for separation between the different efforts and mandates of peacekeeping and peacebuilding on the one hand, and humanitarian action on the other hand, shall be made explicit.

## SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan is an example of a large peacekeeping mission whose mandate has evolved in a significantly changing context. The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) was established following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan, between the government of Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM-A). It was established as a traditional peacekeeping mission, tasked with overseeing a peace agreement, monitoring and verifying security arrangements, support for humanitarian assistance and protection of human rights, as well as providing political support to the parties. This classic peacekeeping mission ended with the independence of South Sudan in 2011 and UNMIS changed to UNMISS, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.<sup>29</sup> The change in mission, mandate, and role of peacekeeping was significant, not only due to the independence of South Sudan, but also because UNMISS's mandate was extended from the consolidation of peace and security to state-building—helping to establish conditions for development and the capacity of the newly independent government to govern effectively and democratically.

This shift rendered the peacekeeping mission both an implementer and supporter of the newly-created independent government. This in itself, was not an undesirable function and role, but one that subsequently and ideally necessitated the need for a separation between humanitarian action and peacebuilding. Prior to a severe breakdown in security in 2013, when South Sudan descended into large-scale civil conflict,<sup>30</sup> the country had been affected by several outbreaks of armed conflict between government forces and non-state actors. Within its mandate of consolidating peace and security, yet at the same time functioning as a de facto adviser and supporter to the government, UNMISS found itself unable to play an impartial role in certain cases and, in others, unable to fulfill its mandate of supporting delivery of humanitarian aid.<sup>31</sup> Both of these were essentially in conflict with the interests of the then-government, of carrying out a counterinsurgency campaign against armed groups opposed to the government, and would subsequently impact the ability of UNMISS to fulfill various parts of its mandate.<sup>32</sup> UNMISS was forced to weigh its priorities on the basis of its proximity to the government and its need to facilitate the delivery of aid and consolidate security.

In such a scenario, for humanitarian aid to maintain a principled and impartial posture, a certain degree of distance from a peacekeeping

mission is required. But in South Sudan, the peacekeeping mission positioned itself on one side of a civil conflict, which became increasingly evident after hostilities exploded in December 2013. As the country and its armed forces fractured along various loyalties, several of its key interlocutors were now fighting each other on opposing sides of the conflict.<sup>33</sup> As the conflict expanded and the component of state-building slid into the background, UNMISS was tested on its ability and willingness to protect civilians in harm's way during the conflict. On several occasions, UNMISS failed to do so, resulting in loss of civilian lives and, in certain areas, a collapse in civilians' faith in the neutrality of the peacekeeping mission.

Both developments had a negative impact on humanitarian organizations' ability to reach and assist affected populations. When a peacekeeping mission is no longer neutral due to association and proximity to the government, humanitarian actors, who are de facto associated with it, get tainted as well. This occurred in South Sudan, where trust between these organizations and the population—essential to delivering principled humanitarian aid—has been compromised due to the relationship with UNMISS. In South Sudan, independence and separation from actors in the conflict *and* from the peacekeeping mission, becomes imperative. As the conflict evolved, UNMISS opened its bases for civilians seeking protection, thus providing passive protection for large numbers of displaced civilians and allowing for UNMISS bases to become de facto displacement camps.<sup>34</sup> UNMISS was widely hailed for this, and rightly so, yet it was also continuously unable to provide more proactive protection of civilians outside the camps and was still viewed as inactive. By opening the UN sites to displaced civilians in numerous local settings, in combination with the lack of proactive protection, UNMISS opened itself to local partisan communal and ethnic dynamics, often from groups opposed to the government. On a very practical level, the need for separation is required on two distinct levels.

Firstly, when the peacekeeping mission is viewed as proximate to the government which is a party to the conflict, and secondly, when the mission is, on one hand, failing to provide protection and, on the other, when doing so, seemingly favoring certain groups. The complexity is further compounded when humanitarian organizations are required to work inside the same UNMISS compounds and bases that are host to hundreds of thousands of displaced civilians. In the former case, in the past, when UNMISS was viewed as proximate to the government,

there were several instances of the mission being targeted, including the shooting down of a UN helicopter, humanitarian organizations were required to distance themselves as much as possible from the mission in order to avoid becoming a target themselves. The fear was that humanitarian organizations could be targeted either by association or by mistake, as both humanitarian agencies and the UN mission were using similar white vehicles and the large integrated UN mission also has a humanitarian component. In the latter case, of a protection of civilians that, by default, favors one particular group, humanitarian organizations working in the UN bases to provide aid to the civilians seeking protection there are often required to establish projects and provide services outside of the UN bases in order to ensure a minimum perception of neutrality and independence. This raises a real and practical dilemma of proximity for humanitarians—damned if you do, damned if you don’t—when trying to navigate the complexities of impartial aid delivery in South Sudan.

## THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the current peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic (CAR), was established in 2014, to replace a regional peacekeeping mission and later an African-led mission.<sup>35</sup> The mission has been beset by changes and uncertainty over who would fund and, thus, lead the mission, as well as concerns over the reliance on peacekeepers from neighboring countries,<sup>36</sup> which have not been viewed as impartial by several local communities. Concurrently, and until 2016, France deployed military forces to support the African-led peacekeeping force.<sup>37</sup>

The mandate of MINUSCA focused specifically on the protection of civilians though at its core also comprised support for the facilitation of humanitarian assistance and human rights, support for security sector reform, including disarmament and demobilization of armed groups, and support for justice and the rule of law.<sup>38</sup> As its name indicates, MINUSCA is an example of a multi-dimensional peacekeeping mission, or a multi-mandated mission. In addition to the challenges evident in South Sudan, the mission in the CAR is more directly involved in active military operations. In fact, most of the actual military operations are carried out by MINUSCA, as the CAR military has very limited capacity.<sup>39</sup> With the

peacekeeping mission being an active party to the conflict, humanitarian organizations struggle to maintain the principle of neutrality.

Due to the limited capacity of government, the peacekeeping mission has taken on several state functions, including a central role in supporting justice and the rule of law. It is in the process of seeking justice—investigating potential crimes and interrogating or arresting suspects/perpetrators—that a potential confrontation with humanitarian organizations, operating across the fault lines of the conflict in the CAR, lies. The mission has found itself engaged in violent conflict with armed groups,<sup>40</sup> and at the same time “dispensing” justice. In cases where peacekeepers themselves have been killed, the mission has sought forceful access to patients in humanitarian facilities, in order to interrogate suspects in the killings. Such practice may not only violate the sanctity and safe space of hospitals and clinics, upon which humanitarian organizations rely in order to impartially treat all victims of conflict; it could also result in situations where patients are not offered the protection to which they are entitled under the law.

The question must be asked: when does the pursuit of justice infringe upon the equal protections afforded to victims and potential perpetrators under IHL? Recent experience in the CAR bears out evidence from other, similar peacekeeping missions: when the mission takes on multiple roles usually reserved for the sovereign power, like seeking justice for crimes against their own staff, IHL and, by extension, the protection of patients, receives less priority. Once again, the danger of losing neutrality—and being perceived by local populations as partial—becomes very real for humanitarians and the consequences can be very grave. In the CAR, humanitarian organizations have become a target for armed groups,<sup>41</sup> who no longer regard them as impartial and independent. This was most pronounced when MINUSCA was tasked with supporting the elections in 2015.<sup>42</sup> An inherently political task, in which parties are often perceived either tacitly or explicitly favoring the incumbent, the role played by MINUSCA further entrenched the perception that all organizations associated with the mission—including humanitarian—were politicized. In practice, the pursuit of justice in the killing of peacekeepers forced humanitarians to prevent peacekeepers from accessing a hospital, as investigators sought to interrogate suspects for possible involvement in the killings. In such cases, the humanitarian organization made it clear that were the UN mission to violate the sanctity of the hospital and compromise the protection of the patient, this could potentially result in the

closure of the hospital. Not only would it violate the above-mentioned principles, it would likely damage the organization's independence and neutrality if armed actors were to perceive the hospital as handing over patients to an opposing group, be that the UN or someone else.

## THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The DRC offers an additional and very practical dilemma between an integrated or multi-mandated UN mission and humanitarian organizations. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the current mission in the DRC, was established in 2010, replacing the previous mission, the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC). The latter was established in 1999 as a peacekeeping force overseeing the Lusaka Agreement, which officially brought an end to the regional conflict that had plagued the DRC in the 1990s (its primarily domestic war lasted until 2003). Because of the changing political and security dynamics, MONUSCO was instituted with a change of focus from overseeing a peace agreement to providing support for humanitarian and human rights efforts, and to support the DRC government in its stabilization and peace consolidations efforts.<sup>43</sup>

Due to increased insecurity in the eastern parts of DRC and poor governmental military capacity, the DRC government, UN, African Union (AU), and regional countries agreed to add an “intervention brigade” to MONUSCO. The intervention brigade was established in 2013 for a one-year period, but the mandate has since been renewed on an annual basis. The brigade consists of regional troops from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and includes infantry, special forces, and artillery battalions. The brigade is tasked with neutralizing armed groups and reducing risks to state authority and civilian security.<sup>44</sup> The latter, in itself, represents a unique change in the role of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, though the UN goes to great lengths to emphasize that the expanded and offensive mandate of the intervention brigade is not a precedent for peacekeeping operations elsewhere.<sup>45</sup>

As much as there is a need for providing security in the eastern DRC, the fact that forward military operations are carried out by a multi-mandated and integrated peacekeeping force represents yet another challenge to humanitarian organizations. When the same force is tasked with simultaneously securing humanitarian assistance and fighting armed

groups, the element of neutrality is long gone. In practice, the same peacekeeping force that one day supports the delivery of humanitarian aid to a specific area may well return the next day, in the same white vehicles or helicopters, only this time for a military operation targeting armed elements. This inherent contradiction between the more peaceful part of the mandate and the actual military part results in communities and armed groups being unable to tell “which UN” has shown up on a given day. For humanitarian organizations it thus becomes difficult, if not impossible, to uphold a constructive, trust-based dialogue with armed groups and communities.

Trust is the essential currency that humanitarians need to engage constructively with armed groups so humanitarian aid can be delivered on impartial, needs-based grounds. Proximity to the multi-mandated UN peacekeeping force in the DRC has been fraught with blurred lines and conflicts of interest. Unsurprisingly, in the eyes of armed groups, the peacekeeping mission has become a legitimate target, as it appears to have become in South Sudan.

The trust deficit which also affects humanitarian groups is painfully illustrated by the relative weakness of the response to the outbreak of Ebola in 2018 in the eastern part of DRC where, historically, government the UN, and humanitarians have had only a nominal presence. The response struggled with serious security incidents and attacks against the newly-arrived government actors seeking to isolate potential Ebola patients. This extended to MONUSCO, which provided military protection and security for responders to the Ebola outbreak.<sup>46</sup> The combination of lack of trust, an approach to the outbreak that was overly focused on militarized response, and the proximity of both the government and the UN mission—who were both leading the response—put humanitarian organizations in an impossible position. Unsurprisingly, they ended up in the crosshairs. Some medical practitioners and patients were killed.<sup>47</sup>

## MALI

Many of the problems identified above are amplified in the case of Mali by the severe levels of violence against the peacekeeping mission and the counterterrorism context in which the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) operates. MINUSMA was established as a multi-mandated mission, tasked with providing the same aspects of protection of civilians, human rights, and

humanitarian operations as other missions. More significant for this analysis, MINUSMA is effectively tasked with supporting state authority through various security and defense measures across the country, especially in central Mali, home to numerous extremist groups.<sup>48</sup> Given the existence of multiple international intervention forces along with myriad armed groups, some of whom are not signatories to a 2015 peace agreement, it is not surprising that MINUSMA has experienced the highest number of casualties of UN missions worldwide.<sup>49</sup>

The complexity of the context and high number of armed groups in Mali is mirrored in MINUSMA, which is largely comprised of regional countries' contributing troops. But, almost uniquely for a peacekeeping mission in Africa, MINUSMA also boasts small contingents of troops from European countries, such as Denmark, Holland, Germany, and Sweden, while Canada and the UK have also committed forces and resources. Mali represents an important confluence of interests for these countries, ranging from counterterrorism to energy security and migration.<sup>50</sup> Mali is of keen interest to European countries from the perspective of curbing migration to Europe.<sup>51</sup> Alongside MINUSMA is the French military Opération Barkhane, and the European Union's training mission with the Malian military. Both are predominantly focused on counterterrorism operations in the region. MINUSMA on the other hand, is not specifically focusing on counterterrorism, though it is engaged in battles against the same groups as Opération Barkhane. While MINUSMA does not have counterterrorism as an explicit part of its mandate, in practice there is little to distinguish the mission from the forces present in Mali that are undertaking counterterrorism operations. Several contingents, hosted within MINUSMA, are in certain cases "detached" to support either the Malian or French militaries in their counterterrorism operations. Assets and personnel from the European contributors to MINUSMA are at times preoccupied with intelligence gathering, though in that process focusing more—for national security reasons—on intelligence gathering related to international counterterrorism, than that related to armed groups fighting the Malian government.<sup>52</sup>

In many respects, Mali is where the broader global discourse of counterterrorism intersects and negatively impacts the provision of principled humanitarian aid. The legal marginalization of armed groups (and by extension communities) and the associated "dehumanizing rhetoric" which characterizes the global fight against terrorism, often trumps

IHL. The term “terrorist” is inherently political and sometimes subjective, and thus very open to opportunistic application. By extension, the discourse and actual conduct of the fight against terrorism, by its restrictive approach, ends up alienating entire communities in a conflict zone and cutting them off from humanitarian aid.<sup>53</sup>

The usual attendant risks for humanitarian organizations, especially related to perceived proximity to the peacekeeping mission, are complicated by the fact that some of the military contingents themselves provide “humanitarian” assistance and rely on humanitarian aid as a way of winning hearts and minds. Humanitarian assistance has been a crucial component of military operations in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations across the world, often in the guise of Quick Impact Projects or QIPs.<sup>54</sup> These are intended to entice communities by providing basic services and infrastructure, in order for them either to abandon armed opposition groups, including some termed as terrorists, or to ensure preference among communities for the state or the intervening military forces.

The real consequence of providing humanitarian aid as part of a military strategy defies the principle of impartiality, as it is no longer needs, but political and military preferences that determine where the humanitarian aid is provided, to say nothing of the inherent contradiction in providing humanitarian aid at the barrel of a gun. This makes the distinction between “principled” and “military” humanitarian aid impossible, and thus indirectly cuts humanitarian organizations off from reaching communities in need, as armed groups question the motives of the entire humanitarian endeavor. This de-legitimizing of humanitarian aid consequently, and directly, prevents humanitarian organizations from providing services where most needed, and may very well make humanitarian organizations a target by armed groups. The UN’s own humanitarian body the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), raised this concern, acknowledging that affiliation with a party to the conflict (including the UN itself) compromises security and humanitarian access.<sup>55</sup> Thus the complexity of the interaction between humanitarian organizations and peacekeepers is well established to the point of acknowledging it, yet its consequences remain unaddressed.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Understand, define, and depoliticize the role of humanitarian aid and action.* The role of humanitarian aid and action is not to contribute to the strengthening of a particular power structure, be it a state or local government, through efforts of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The role and function of humanitarian action is to save lives and alleviate suffering. The conflation and integration of humanitarian aid into otherwise laudable causes, in most cases, does little more than devalue humanitarian aid and even, in cases where vulnerable populations are excluded, negate the prospects of sustainable peace. Thus, it is important when discussing the potential contribution of humanitarian NGOs to understand that the objectives and missions are fundamentally different and there is, in many cases, a need for separation between peacekeeping and humanitarianism. A separation not based on a value judgment of the need, intentions, and desire for peacekeeping and peacebuilding, but a separation necessary to ensure the ability of both to fulfill their respective mandates. Accordingly, the lack of integration and in some cases even lack of collaboration, should not be viewed as humanitarian organizations spoiling the efforts of peacekeeping, but as a mechanism and a way to maintain coexistence.
2. *Distinguish and separate peacekeeping missions from humanitarian missions.* As contemporary African conflicts and, by extension, peacekeeping missions have changed from the classic approach of monitoring a ceasefire or peace agreement to peacekeeping missions being involved in a wider array of activities, such as state-building, supporting state authority, counterinsurgency, and a blurred mix of counterterrorism and state support, the need for humanitarian agencies to distinguish, and in some cases even separate themselves from these missions, is becoming increasingly obvious. Not only do humanitarian agencies need to separate themselves from these missions in order to fulfill their proper role, but the actions of some of these missions can increase the security risk for humanitarian agencies. The argument is not to undermine the mandate and processes carried out by peacekeeping missions, but rather to accept that the roles, mandates, and objectives of peacekeeping missions and humanitarian agencies are distinct. Humanitarian organizations need to embrace and protect this different

identity. The overlapping of different roles is understandable in certain contexts, yet it remains an uncomfortable compromise. The current trend—dogmatically promoted by donors and the UN—of blending peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian aid into one holistic response should be resisted. The idea of linking the various components typically arises from a noble intent, but, as acknowledged by UN OCHA in Mali and demonstrated elsewhere, principled humanitarian aid is often sacrificed where it is needed most. In the absence of a return to clearly delineated roles in conflict and post-conflict settings, the humanitarian actions will become less and less effective over time.

3. *Enhance the independence of humanitarian organizations through diversified funding.* Humanitarians also need to look in the mirror. To promote their independence, they must do more and do better to secure funding from bi- and multilateral donors. This is not a process that the donors themselves will initiate; they are largely moving in a different direction. It is thus up to humanitarian organizations to make the case forcefully that their role and functions cannot be farmed out to nonexperts or politically “compromised” actors, and to educate donors on the perils of blurring responsibilities.
4. *Create space for humanitarian missions.* Principled humanitarian aid cannot be provided at the barrel of a gun, whether it is a combatant’s or a putative peacekeeper’s. The current operational doctrine which has given rise to multi-mandated organizations is flawed. Humanitarians must be given the space to do their work. No less, no more.

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## CHAPTER 16

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# Peace Management and Conflict Resolution: A Practitioner's Perspective

*Ibrahim A. Gambari*

## INTRODUCTION

In order to address violent conflicts across the world, international collaboration and astute coordination are required. This is not possible without an urgent, overall enhancement of global and regional mechanisms for peace management and conflict resolution. Currently, 65 million of the approximately 7.6 billion people on earth are forcibly displaced persons (FDPs). This situation is but a symptom of protracted conflicts mainly in ten countries/areas—Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia, Sudan, Colombia, the Caucasus, and the former Yugoslavia. In addition, 32 other countries have been the source of a large number of refugees and 53 countries are involved in managing internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will discuss the broad issues of prevention, as well as mediation of conflicts, followed by a brief synopsis of three

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case studies in violent conflict—Cyprus, Myanmar, and Darfur. The subsequent outlining of key peacebuilding challenges and conclusions are drawn in part from my personal experience in the management and attempted resolution of these conflicts, principally in my former role as the Joint Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Chief Mediator and Chairperson of the African Union/Head of the UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). Other relevant experiences drawn on below are my role as UN Secretary General's Special Representative and Head of the UN Mission in Angola, and the UN Under Secretary-General/Special Adviser on Africa heading the Office, which was the focal point for promoting and coordinating international support for the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

The United Nations (UN) is premised on the concept of collective security: the idea that a threat to peace anywhere should be considered a threat to peace everywhere and should be met with a collective response based on global solidarity. In reality, however, the record of the international community in conflict management and conflict resolution is mixed. On the positive side, the Human Security Report of 2005 found a 40 percent decline in violent conflicts between 1992 and 2004.<sup>2</sup> The report attributed this, in part, to the efforts made by UN peacemaking. Nonetheless, we are all living witnesses to the mass suffering caused by prolonged ongoing conflicts in many parts of the world. Examples of failures of collective security are not hard to find.

We need to better understand the reasons for relative successes in global peacemaking, as well as conspicuous failures, and adapt our strategies and capacities in order to produce more durable, negotiated solutions. In this regard, we need to recognize that the nature of conflict—its root causes, the type of protagonists—has changed.

Three evolving conflict dynamics stand out:

- i. Violence is overwhelmingly intra-state;
- ii. the number of non-state actors involved is growing; and
- iii. non-state actors have added more complexity to the root causes and management of conflict.

Both in academia and among diplomats, there are choices and preferred approaches to conflict resolution. Opinions differ on why mediation efforts, especially for intractable conflicts, fail. My own experience suggests that the prescription of “one-size-fits-all” solutions is often to blame. Most conflicts feature complex interactions of different forces,

with each requiring well-designed structures and responses that are oriented to the needs of the specific situation.

What have come to be known as “spoilers” in a peace process are an endemic problem.<sup>3</sup> Whether real or potential, leaders of parties or movements, either within or outside a peace process, spoilers are typically thought to constitute themselves as deliberate obstacles to the peaceful settlement of conflicts and employ violence to achieve their objectives. At the same time, it is not clear whether the term “spoiler” is ascriptive or earned, whether they are homegrown or externally generated. My own experience suggests that the spoilers of today can become the partners of peace tomorrow.

Africa has the most developed regional organization in the developing world for conflict resolution and peace management. The African Union (AU) was founded in May 2001 in Addis Ababa (and launched in Durban, South Africa in 2002), as a successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which came into being in 1963.<sup>4</sup> The first OAU peacekeeping operation was in Chad in December 1981. Beset by myriad problems, and without assistance from the UN, it lasted only until June 1982. On the whole, the OAU’s efforts to maintain peace and security in Africa were mostly weak and ineffectual.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the transformation of the OAU to AU can be understood as a reinvigoration of the organization in tackling Africa’s security challenges.

The AU has a Peace and Security Council, and a Department of Peace and Security, headed by a Commissioner working with (not under) the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. One of the more significant developments in the history of the AU is the formation of the African Standby Force (ASF). My experience in leading the assessment of military and civilian experts on making the ASF fully operational reaffirmed my belief in its necessity for Africa, though the challenge of creating a deployable force still remains at the time of writing.

By 2019, AU peacekeeping/peace-enforcement missions were deployed in Somalia and there was also a Joint AU/UN Peacekeeping Mission in Darfur. The latter was, until recently, the largest international peacekeeping force. At its peak and under my leadership as Joint Special Representative, the AU had about 30,000 military, police, and civilian personnel. It was also the most expensive mission, with an annual budget of between US \$1.5 billion and US \$1.7 billion.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, there is the Panel of the Wise, comprising select former statesmen and stateswomen. The Panel was created in late 2002 and became operational in 2008. It boasts several subregional counterparts.

Collectively, these organs and structures are known as the AU Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).<sup>7</sup>

The AU's APSA is underpinned by the now commonly held view that there is a strong nexus between peace, security, development, human rights, and democratization. Two seminal reports bear out this key relationship, the first in 1992 by the then-UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*<sup>8</sup> and the second, by his successor, Kofi Annan, *In Larger Freedom*.<sup>9</sup>

## CYPRUS AND MYANMAR—LESSONS FOR AFRICA?

**Cyprus** is one of the longest running conflicts in the dossier of the UN. There has been both a UN peacekeeping operation deployed there since 1964, the year after hostilities broke out, as well as the Secretary-General's Good Offices Mission Role after 1974. The latter was encouraged by the Security Council following the division of the country into two hostile camps of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots—as well as the presence of Turkish troops in Cyprus.

The admission of a divided country, Cyprus, as a full member of the European Union has been a complicating factor in seeking a resolution of the conflict. The UN has remained a key third party continuously seeking a formula that would lead to a bizonal, bicommunal federal state.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, each community in Cyprus has regarded the other as the “spoiler” in the peace process. That much was clear to me during my short time as UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Cyprus in the mid-2000s. This situation is common in Africa, where the idea of “spoilers” is bandied about, without consideration for what their objectives might actually entail. In the case of Cyprus, it is fair to say some have broader national and international objectives, while others are more limited. But, as in parts of Africa, it is an open question whether some are bent on prolonging the stalemate forever.

Nearly fifty years on, there is no tangible sense of urgency in resolving the conflict in Cyprus. It has been compared to “a padlock requiring four keys, held respectively by the Greek Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriots, Greece and Turkey.” In the words of another former Special Envoy, Alvaro de Soto, who handled the dossier on behalf of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the history of attempts to overcome the division of Cyprus can be measured in false dawns. One or another leader could always be relied upon to thwart the effort and yell “no!”, and support

from either Ankara or Athens would be withdrawn.<sup>11</sup> The most comprehensive plan to resolve the conflict, which was presented by the UN to the parties and also had the blessing of the European Union, was put to referenda in 2004. It was approved by the Turkish Cypriots but turned down by the Greek Cypriots. More than fifteen years on, it is unclear if Cyprus is any closer to a durable solution or on the cusp of another false dawn.

**Myanmar** was once thought to be one of the world's most intractable internal conflicts, as stubborn as any long-running conflict in Africa, pitching the military versus the people. It is a country that was once beset by grave human rights abuses, and its democratic prospects in the 1990s seemed dim. The UN attempted to mobilize the support of neighboring countries and other key states through the Secretary-General's special envoys and advisors. Their role would be to assist the Government of Myanmar in implementing its Seven Steps Road Map toward democracy, announced by General Khin Nyunt in 2003, which would mean addressing the country's multi-dimensional problems (human rights, forced labor, child soldiers, humanitarian access and delay in achieving Millennium Development Goals, etc.).

The failure of past engagements with Myanmar was due to issues around its international isolation, economic sanctions, and Security Council Resolutions against the regime.

In pursuing the Secretary-General's Good Offices Role in Myanmar as the third Special Envoy, I was given a formidable set of tasks. Four main principles guided my efforts:

- i. Ensuring that the Secretary-General's Good Offices was perceived as a process and not an event;
- ii. Given the complexities of the Myanmar conflict, not reducing our approach to a single issue (e.g., freedom for imprisoned democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi, however important a priority that may have been);
- iii. Engaging with the Government—and, to an extent, the opposition—could not be an end in itself, instead there must be progress, measurable in concrete terms; and
- iv. Engaging with all those, both inside and outside the country, who could contribute to addressing Myanmar's challenges.

In line with these principles, and with support from the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN), China, India, Japan, and others, my role was to bring the government and the opposition leaders together to commence a political process. In doing so, it was not uncommon to feel the wrath of exiled groups in Thailand, London, and the United States and some key members of the Security Council, who did not want the country's National League for Democracy and its leadership to participate in the elections, which they saw as illegitimate. I was convinced then, and proved right subsequently, that without the elections, there was not a viable path to the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and the resolution of the political deadlock in Myanmar. As it happened, the newly elected president undertook dramatic and significant reform measures aimed at promoting democracy and transforming the largely centralized economy into an increasingly market-oriented one. Myanmar subsequently moved from one positive milestone to another, including chairmanship of ASEAN and, via elections, the elevation of San Suu Kyi to a position equivalent to prime minister. However, the massacre of Rohingyas beginning in early 2018 and the consequent collapse of San Suu Kyi's global reputation illustrates how much more needs to be done to cement the democratic gains of the past decade and to reaffirm peaceful coexistence and respect for human rights in Myanmar.

## DARFUR/SUDAN

In 2009, the AU High-Level Panel on Darfur, led by former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, defined the Darfur conflict as "Sudan's crisis in Darfur." In doing so, the Panel stated that "the root of the Darfur crisis lies in the history of neglect of the Sudanese peripheries, dating from colonial times and continuing during the years of Sudan's independence."<sup>12</sup> In other words, the conflict should not be seen in terms of identity: Arabs versus Africans, Christian versus Muslims, or North versus the South.<sup>13</sup> Rather, and especially following the separation of South Sudan from the rest of the country in July 2011, it's a conflict over access to resources (especially water), power (largely concentrated in Khartoum) and economic opportunities. The reason so many past agreements were "dishonored" is partly down to a misdiagnosis of the problem.<sup>14</sup> The centrality of access to water, in particular, was my main motivation as Head of the African Union–UN Hybrid Operation in

Darfur (UNAMID), to organize a large international forum on Water for Peace.

Following an escalation of violence in the region and subsequent humanitarian crisis in 2003–2004, ceasefire agreements were brokered and the first contingent of military observers and protection forces were deployed. This marked the beginning of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS).<sup>15</sup> Its initial success in stabilizing the situation on the ground was not followed by a Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which could have paved the way for peace and development in Darfur. The challenges on the ground were formidable: protection of a dispersed civilian population and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to over 2 million internally displaced persons and 300,000 refugees. AMIS, despite some support from international partners, could not cope. After initial resistance from the Government of Sudan, they eventually agreed to allow in UNAMID. This AU–UN hybrid mission was arguably, at the time, the most extensive collaboration ever mounted between a global and regional organization in the area of peace and security. UNAMID took over from AMIS on January 1, 2008. If anything, AMIS showed that Africa is willing to put its boots where its politics lay. And when the history of Darfur is written, the work of AMIS should be viewed as essential to averting what could have been another Rwanda.<sup>16</sup>

Stark challenges remain in Darfur today. There are still significant parties to the conflict which are not signatories to the peace process. But the current situation is vastly better than what obtained in Darfur in the 2000s. The signing of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) on July 14, 2011 between the Government of Sudan and one of the armed movements, Liberation and Justice Movement, was a significant early milestone. Thereafter followed a number of positive developments, including the establishment of a Darfur Regional Authority and an international Donor Conference on Reconstruction and Development in Darfur in 2013, where over US \$3 billion was pledged. The periodic outbreaks of violence since then illustrate that more work needs to be done, especially in improving local capacities for addressing the root causes of protracted violent conflict.

In his Report on Enhancing Mediation and Its Support Activities (S/2009/189 of 8 April 2009), then-UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon, made urgent recommendations on the management of conflict and achieving peace. These include:

- i. The need for experienced and knowledgeable mediators and support teams;
- ii. the need for sufficient resources to help parties design and pursue processes which address root causes of conflicts and achieve agreements which lead to durable peace; and
- iii. the need for building capacities for mediation at the local, national, and regional levels, while promoting coherent partnerships between the UN, regional and subregional organizations, member states and NGOs.

## KEY CHALLENGES

*Striking a Balance Between Peace and Justice, Including  
Strengthening Relations Between the United Nations  
and the International Criminal Court*

The first challenge lies in the increased demands on the UN to both facilitate the negotiation of peace agreements and to establish accountability mechanisms. This has led us to examine the relationship between the UN and the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the interaction between UN representatives and persons indicted by the ICC. While in the long run, peace and justice are mutually reinforcing, in the short run there are often tensions between these two essential goals. As then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated before the Security Council in 2003,

We should know that there cannot be real peace without justice, yet the relentless pursuit of justice may sometimes be an obstacle to peace. If we insist, at all times and in all places, on punishing those who are guilty of extreme violations of human rights, it may be difficult or even impossible to stop the bloodshed and save innocent civilians. If we always and everywhere insist on uncompromising standards of justice, a delicate peace may not survive. But equally, if we ignore the demands of justice simply to secure agreements, the foundations of that agreement will be fragile and will set bad precedents.<sup>17</sup>

To help manage these tensions, the UN Secretariat came to the following conclusions:

- i. On the relationship between peace and justice: there is no sustainable peace without justice—although they can be sequenced in time;

- ii. The UN does not recognize amnesty for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law;
- iii. On the UN–ICC relationship: while the ICC is independent of the UN, the UN supports the Court and avoids any action likely to undermine its authority; and
- iv. Contacts between UN representatives and persons holding positions of authority in their country who have been indicted by the ICC should be limited to what is strictly required for carrying out UN-mandated activities.

The preamble to the 1998 Rome Statute, which created and governs the ICC,<sup>18</sup> highlighted that the states parties express their determination “to put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of crimes and thus to contribute to the ‘prevention’ of such crimes.”<sup>19</sup> The “prevention” role given to the ICC stems from the view that courts can prevent crimes through punishments that have a deterrent effect, though, to date, arguably no such punishments have been severe enough to achieve that.

My own experience leads me to believe that you do not have to choose between peace and justice; you can phase them in according to the circumstances—i.e., what the demands of peace suggest. The removal of Charles Taylor from Liberia in 2003 is a case in point. If he had not been taken out of Liberia by prior arrangement involving the African Union, the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) and Nigeria, it is hard to imagine what fate may have befallen the country he led for 6 years. The peace process would probably never have gotten off the ground. And although justice may have been delayed in Taylor’s case because of the imperative of peace, eventually it too would be achieved.

### *Factoring Implementation Agreements into Mediation Efforts*

A second challenge is the need to factor implementation arrangements into the mediation process. The UN is often asked to help the parties implement agreements that were reached without its involvement, that sometimes go against fundamental UN principles, and, moreover, that offer no practical possibilities for implementation. For example, an agreement may hold unrealistic expectations of international support, or a

timetable which neither party can manage. As a general rule, those institutions which are expected to support implementation should also be present, at least as an observer, during the negotiations.

### *Ensuring Strong Women’s Participation in Conflict Resolution*

A third challenge is women’s inclusion in the negotiation and mediation process, rather than just “civil society participation.” The UN, like other governmental and inter-governmental bodies, has too few women engaged in these tasks. Although the AU and all the regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa have made laudable strides, boasting gender units and improved means of gender mainstreaming,<sup>20</sup> to the extent that the AU declared the 2010s to be the African Women’s Decade (AWD),<sup>21</sup> the vision is yet to be realized. Studies have shown that women tend to be better at conflict management, have better listening skills, more tolerance, and empathy.<sup>22</sup> Africa is losing out for not doing more to rectify gender imbalances in conflict resolution and mediation.

### *Managing Spoilers Through Innovative Approaches: Inducements, Socializations, Coercion, and Leverage*

The UN does not have the luxury of not engaging spoilers—the fourth challenge—in peace processes in which the organization is involved. (How can one change their behavior without engagement?) The issue for the UN is what kind of engagement is most appropriate or capable of providing deliverables. In this regard, and with the caveat below, I endorse Stephen Steadman’s broad categories of engaging spoilers.<sup>23</sup>

#### *The Inducement or Carrots Strategy*

This strategy consists of accepting all the demands of a spoiler in exchange for concessions in the peace process. These demands can include recognition or legitimacy, physical protection by UN troops, economic or political benefits. The inducement approach is the easiest strategy to implement. Unfortunately, when used improperly it can exacerbate the situation, as occurred in Angola in 1992 when custodians permitted the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) to play a continued role in the negotiations despite resuming war. On the other hand, in Cyprus, the UN Peace Plan 2004 and the 8th of July Agreement

were designed to keep the two opposing communities strictly engaged in the peace process.

### *The Socialization Strategy*

This strategy demands that spoilers conform to a set of norms and standards to be allowed into the peace process. For socialization to be effective, norms must be fair and realistic, they must be clearly established, communicated to all stakeholders and remain consistent over time.

### *Coercion or Stick Strategy*

This strategy relies on the threat or reality of punishment. This approach includes coercive diplomacy, the use of force, the muted withdrawal of peacekeepers or other international forces, the imposition of “no-fly” zones, and the “departing train” strategy, which is meant to convey to spoilers that the peace process will proceed with or without them. The coercion strategy requires active measures to protect the parties engaged in the peace process and to deter spoilers. The “withdrawal” strategy is not to be considered lightly, given the disastrous experience of Rwanda, where the UN mission was hastily scaled back at the outbreak of the genocide, leading to even greater loss of life.<sup>24</sup> Needless to say, there should be no exit of UN peacekeeping operations without a clear strategy.

### *Exercising Leverage*

A fifth challenge is the appropriate exercise of leverage in support of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. A lot has been written about sticks and carrots. I would draw attention to three types of leverage that are sometimes undervalued and therefore underutilized:

- i. Leverage which accrues when a mediator builds a relationship of trust with the parties, so that they will have sufficient confidence to ask for advice and be amenable to accept the mediator’s suggestions. Mediators need to be prepared to invest personally in building such relationships.
- ii. Leverage that results from being able to mobilize impartial technical expertise. While peace processes are fundamentally political in nature, technical advice can sometimes help to find a way out of an impasse, not least by giving the parties a common professional language or set of concepts to work with.

- iii. Leverage in the form of “enabling resources,” which can help a party to carry out its side of the bargain, e.g., assistance given to a guerrilla army to transform itself into an effective political party.

***Promoting Cohesion among Mediators and Good Offices through Support for a Unified Mediator***

A sixth challenge is the proliferation of actors involved in mediation. Overall this is a positive development. While the UN is the best placed to succeed in some cases, in other situations one of its partners, such as the AU, European Union, or ASEAN may have a comparative advantage. Under Chapter VIII of its Charter, the UN encourages regional organizations to assist in areas of peace and security. This can be seen in the support the UN gives to the AU and their ongoing cooperation in peace operations, which has so far proved more effective than unilateral undertakings. Ultimately, success often rests on the ability of all actors involved to unify behind a chief mediator. The proclivity of actors to “shop around” for the forum that best suits their interests is an ever-present danger in any peacebuilding environment.

Besides stature and expertise, the qualities that make up an effective chief mediator include but are not limited to: impartiality, patience, humility, and respectfulness. The chief mediator must know when to walk away if a peace process comes to a dead-end, the trust and confidence of the parties involved have dissolved, or the mediator has become the “issue” rather than the substance of the conflict.

***Relations with NGOs and Civil Society Groups***

At the height of the conflict in Darfur, over 300,000 people were dead and 2 million were internally displaced and living in camps, out of a total population of 7 million. Peacekeepers were tasked with facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need, but it was the NGOs and the wider humanitarian community who were responsible for providing for the basic needs of Darfurians in the camps. Their essential role in delivering food, clothing, education, and health assistance cannot be understated.

Insofar as the peace process, however, the place of NGOs—the seventh and last challenge—became much more complicated and contested. By design or default, they became advocates for one or other armed movements. In effect, they took sides in Darfur, as they have done elsewhere.

Whenever this occurs, the UN or chief mediator is placed in an invidious position, as their role is to reconcile not take sides. Consequently, it is not uncommon for relationships with NGOs to sour or even break down. This must be avoided at all costs, however. Regular engagement with NGOs is essential; it is not optional. Without NGOs, victims of war would have no one to turn to, and their voices would go largely unheard.

## CONCLUSION

The Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations starts with the words: “We the People.” It is a recognition that the *raison d’être* of the world body, *i.e.*, the prevention and resolution of wars and conflict, is far too important to be left to countries and their governments alone.

The UN Charter is clear that the Security Council, and by implication its five permanent members, have primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In addition, Chapter VIII of the Charter provides for regional arrangements to complement the efforts of the United Nations. My long experience of peacebuilding in Africa—as mediator, envoy, practitioner, and thinker—leaves me in no doubt that regional organizations must, and are best suited to, initiate conflict resolution efforts and do the heavy-lifting, before the UN enters the arena as a partner and takes over peacekeeping duties. Yet, to paraphrase the late Lord Caradon, former Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom: the United Nations is only as strong as member states allow it to be in terms of preventing, managing, and resolving wars and violent conflict. This is also applicable to regional organizations such as the African Union.

Effective action for peace by the United Nations and regional organizations increasingly depends on the pressure NGOs, scholars, activists, and ordinary citizens bring to bear on their governments and political leaders. Much more needs to be done to safeguard human rights everywhere and to peacefully resolve violent conflicts. This was the inspiration behind the establishment of the Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development (SCDDD)<sup>25</sup> and other like-minded institutes and organizations the world over. To paraphrase the motto of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

since wars begin in people's minds, it is in these same minds that the defense of peace must be constructed.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Pay more attention to sequencing of peace and justice—it is not an either/or trade-off.* Mindful that the deterrent effect of International Criminal Court indictments on preventing crimes is, at best, unproven, peacebuilding requires flexibility on the timing of peace and justice processes. The context should determine what is appropriate, not arbitrary deadlines set by outsiders.
2. *Women must be central to peacebuilding processes, not included as part of a civil society component.* Africa is losing out by not doing more to rectify gender imbalances in conflict resolution and mediation.
3. *Build support and create new mechanisms for developing a Unified Mediator.* Today's peacebuilding environments are replete with multiple actors leveraging different platforms off against one another to advance their own interests. Yet success in peacebuilding often rests on actors rallying behind a single chief mediator who commands support across the political landscape.

**Acknowledgement** The author thanks Moses Ohaegbuchi, for research assistance in preparing this chapter.

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PART IV

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## Country-Case Studies



## CHAPTER 17

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# Peacebuilding as State Building? Lessons from the Democratic Republic of the Congo

*Rachel Sweet*

## INTRODUCTION

International peacebuilding is embroiled in contradictions: do peace accords reflect reality, or merely rhetoric? Does third-party enforcement guarantee credible commitments, or compromise sovereignty? Can political institutions balance the interests of armed rivals? The evolution of peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) offers insight into critical policy dilemmas. From 1996 to 2003, two wars broke out in the DRC,<sup>1</sup> followed by a fragile peace and remobilized rebellions. These conflicts have been an experimenting ground for a broad menu of peacebuilding policies. Internationally backed accords integrated rebels into state positions, a power-sharing government aimed to transform belligerents into political competitors, and national elections sought to consolidate progress toward institutionalized competition. Meanwhile, the largest and most costly United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission in history is designed to protect civilians and support

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inclusive governing institutions. Yet, despite these efforts, armed groups in the DRC multiplied to an estimated 130 by 2019, yielding fragmentation rather than stability.<sup>2</sup> Civilians across the country face insecurity, recurrent government repression, and troubled elections.<sup>3</sup> Why have international peacebuilding efforts failed?

To make sense of these dilemmas, this chapter revisits a guiding assumption of global policy. Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, policy-makers have treated state-building, or investing in legitimate governing institutions, as a central component of peacebuilding.<sup>4</sup> A wave of academic studies since the early 2000s casts weak governing institutions as incubators of insecurity and a range of social ills.<sup>5</sup> In response, international peacebuilding moved from narrow tasks of ceasefires and patrolling buffer zones to a more extensive focus on building up political institutions in host states.<sup>6</sup> State-building as a form of peacebuilding is “premised on the recognition that achieving security and development in societies emerging from civil war partly depends on the experience of capable, autonomous, and legitimate governmental institutions.”<sup>7</sup> Yet, practitioners heeding this lesson did not fully account for the informal networks and predatory logics that can also animate official institutions.<sup>8</sup> State-building attempts that graft institutions atop preexisting violent networks can produce institutions that lack their anticipated moderating or stabilizing effects.

The DRC illustrates this policy trend and the cracks in its approach. Peacebuilding efforts in the DRC grew from a focus on peace accords toward institutional design and state-building projects. These efforts aimed to stem violence by expanding the footprint of the state, but the state’s political and military institutions—its bureaucracy and security forces—were more porous than policymakers assumed. Parallel networks within the national army supported armed groups, while parallel taxation schemes in the official bureaucracy helped sustain rebels’ war economies. State-building policies viewed official institutions as buffers against rebellion, but in reality conflict actors straddled a blurred line between state institutions and violence.

This chapter traces this lesson across three stages of peacebuilding in the DRC that showcase the evolution of global policy. The first stage used peace accords to end the Second Congo War (1998–2003), part of a wave of negotiated settlements to end armed conflicts in the post-Cold War era. The second implemented peace accords through the Transitional Government (2003–2006), reflecting another mainstream policy tool in action:

power sharing. The third stage expanded the mandate of the UN mission to state-building through laying physical infrastructure for administrations and deploying military force to build state influence over belligerents. Across these approaches, policymakers viewed official institutions as tools to mitigate violence: incorporating rebels into government posts would moderate their behavior, and expanding the reach of state administrations would reduce the physical and social space for rebels to organize. And yet, each phase struggled to cope with the porous nature of the state. Rebels used bureaucracy to finance violence. Peace accords and the transitional government transferred the symbols of the state institutions to combatants, but did not reshape the underlying networks that directed them. And UN efforts to shore up state authority overlooked the complicity between the national military and armed groups.

Of course, peacebuilding in the DRC is more nuanced than a brief chapter can capture. Youth associations such as LUCHA and FILIMBI illustrate the critical role of grassroots democracy movements.<sup>9</sup> New rebellions and day-to-day coping mechanisms in the face of insecurity also warrant attention. Nonetheless, overall stages discussed here help shed light on key dilemmas of global policy. The remainder of this chapter positions the DRC within the overall shifts in international peacebuilding. It shows how practitioners, following the policy wisdom of the day, privileged official institutions to mitigate violence, but drew too firm of boundaries between these and non-state actors. Empirically, the chapter draws on original records from armed groups and the UN peacekeeping mission to illustrate its argument.

## THE SHIFT IN INTERNATIONAL PEACEBUILDING TOWARD STATE-BUILDING

International peacebuilding increasingly emphasizes a role for formal political institutions in ending violent conflict. With the end of the Cold War, financial and military backing for proxy insurgencies declined, and international interests shifted toward ending civil wars. During the Cold War, peacebuilding favored limited interventions. UN missions, like in Cyprus, took on narrow roles of peace enforcement and patrolling buffer zones. After the Cold War, policymakers grew more proactive through brokering peace accords and bringing belligerents to negotiating tables.

Civil wars increasingly ended in negotiated settlements rather than military victory, introducing questions of institutional design as security priorities.<sup>10</sup>

Within this trend, power-sharing governments became the preferred tool to mediate conflict.<sup>11</sup> Power sharing aims to curb the uncertainty of political competition by providing all groups a stake in the official process and building consensus for a common governance formula.<sup>12</sup> In this logic, incorporating rebels into official institutions would moderate their behavior and reward political, rather than military, competition. These agreements are typically backed by a third-party enforcer, such as a UN peacekeeping mission, and culminate in national elections. During the 1990s, the United States and Europe used these settlements in stalled conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and the DRC. Power sharing has been subject to many critiques: moderate politicians may be difficult to find after war, elites may be unaccountable to constituents, and agreements may reward violent pathways to power.<sup>13</sup> Practitioners typically respond by revising official rules to get incentives right, reaffirming the role of formal institutions to peacebuilding.

From the late 1990s to the early 2000s, global policy expanded to a more comprehensive state-building approach. A focus on negotiated settlements and elections grew to include building rule of law institutions and participating in political reconstruction.<sup>14</sup> Multilateral peacekeeping forces incorporated state-building into their mandate.<sup>15</sup> Now the goal was not simply to enforce ceasefires or patrol buffer zones, but to lay the foundation for stability by investing in the political institutions of the host country. Major foreign policy developments reinforced this approach. After the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001, academic and policy audiences framed weak institutions as security threats.<sup>16</sup> Weak states and governing institutions were viewed as potential hotbeds of terrorist activity, adding a national security imperative to supporting state authority.

The DRC illustrates this policy trajectory. The international community used negotiated settlements and promises of “all inclusive” institutions to end the Second Congo War (1998–2003). The Transitional Government (2003–2006) implemented the power-sharing arrangement in the national government and state security forces. After the 2006 elections, the UN embarked on a more expansive state-building mandate to invest in infrastructure and institutions, even participating in active combat to “restore state authority” over belligerents. And yet, each of

these phases struggled to cope with the “real politics” embedded in state institutions.<sup>17</sup>

## EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL PEACEBUILDING IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The DRC seemed a good candidate for state-building because its own institutions were seemingly absent. Amidst a growing wisdom that weak institutions enable war, the DRC ranked lowest in the world on a host of governance indicators. It was widely characterized as an ideal-typical “criminalized” or “warlord” state,<sup>18</sup> with little centralized control over a vast territory.<sup>19</sup> But, beyond the attention of international policymakers, a state apparatus and affiliation persisted and continued to shape political struggles.

### *Background to the Conflicts*

The DRC’s conflict followed on the heels of the predatory government under President Mobutu Sese Seko.<sup>20</sup> At independence, the DRC’s ruling class inherited a colonial administration that set up institutions for extraction rather than public goods. After a turbulent transition to independence, Mobutu seized power in a 1965 military coup and consolidated power. Declining prices in international commodities in the early 1970s drained the public treasury. Mobutu turned toward divide-and-rule politics and salary payments to state agents dried up.

Political fragmentation in the DRC is often confused with an absent bureaucracy.<sup>21</sup> Scholars depict its peripheries as areas of “limited state penetration.”<sup>22</sup> But in reality, rank-and-file bureaucrats coped with uncertainty through a system of kickbacks, embezzlement, and private survival that multiplied taxes rather than retrenching state agencies.<sup>23</sup> In his public call for the population to *débrouillez-vous*, or “fend for yourself,” Mobutu gave the nod to soldiers, regional governors, and bureaucrats to use official posts for private ends. The result was a predatory bureaucracy and military where officials from the top to bottom survived through extortion. Although the central government was unable to use institutions for a coherent purpose, the ability to extract remained linked to these official bureaus and uniforms. This system preserved the value of state affiliation and economic and political rent, shaping wartime struggles and later state-building attempts.<sup>24</sup>

As the Cold War drew to an end and reduced foreign aid, Mobutu broke his prohibition on political parties and ushered in a brief political liberalization (1990–1996). Mobutu clung to power by fragmenting the opposition, and the number of parties multiplied to over 200.<sup>25</sup> As part of his divide-and-rule tactics, Mobutu had continued colonial policies of building dependent constituencies by rewarding ethnic minorities with state appointments and land.<sup>26</sup> This linked resource access to ethnic identity and meant that inter-ethnic competitions also played out over access to state posts. The outbreak of genocide in neighboring Rwanda in 1994 sent an influx of refugees to the DRC, exacerbated tensions with Banyarwanda (Kinyarwanda-speaking) minorities, and paved the way for war.<sup>27</sup>

Rebellion broke out with the First Congo War (1996–1997).<sup>28</sup> A broad coalition of foreign sponsors sent troops to an easy victory in Kinshasa. Mobutu's crumbling government gave way, and insurgent leader Laurent Kabila was installed as President. Many former members of the national army defected and joined the insurgency, opening a revolving door between the national military and armed groups. When the newly installed president turned his back on his sponsors, the backers of the First Congo War organized a new rebellion. Spearheaded by Rwanda and Uganda, the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) launched the Second Congo War from eastern DRC in August 1998. Belligerents expected to replicate the previous victory, but military progress soon stalled. The stalemate paved the way for growing international involvement in the crisis. Meanwhile, bureaucrats clung to administrative posts and armed groups amplified their political influence by appropriating these agencies, mixing official institutions with violent networks.

### *Peace Accords: Ending the Second Congo War (1998–2003)*

International peacebuilding followed the conventional policy of the day: negotiated settlements and power sharing were the primary tools for ending the Second Congo War. The first priority was bringing rivals to the negotiating table. The high number of belligerents made this difficult: nine states supporting insurgents or the government earned the conflict the moniker of “Africa’s World War.”<sup>29</sup> The battlefield mirrored a fragmented political landscape. The largest armed group, the RCD, relied primarily on Rwanda for support, and the Banyarwanda affiliation of its leadership embroiled the group into preexisting ethnic

tensions.<sup>30</sup> Uganda created a second proxy, the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), in 1998. And, in 1999 the Rally for Congolese Democracy/Kisangani-Movement for Liberation (RCD/K-ML) splinter defected from the RCD, taking Ugandan sponsorship with it. A range of local defense groups, or Mayi-Mayi, also organized, creating a multi-tiered conflict with regional and local contenders.<sup>31</sup>

Negotiations targeted the upper echelons of this conflict system. The first step was the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 1999, which joined six states, three international organizations, and two rebel groups (the RCD and MLC). The Lusaka Agreement incorporated a power-sharing logic that aimed to build consensus on a new political structure where parties would “enjoy equal status.”<sup>32</sup> It called for inclusive peace talks at an Inter-Congolese Dialogue that promised recognition for the government and main rebel factions. President Laurent Kabil initially refused negotiations and power sharing. Yet he agreed to the accord because it recognized him as the head of state and he thought that the national dialogue could be maneuvered in his favor.<sup>33</sup> Parties agreed to an immediate ceasefire with fixed frontlines, a joint military commission to head an integrated national army at war’s end, and a UN mission to enforce the ceasefire in the meantime.<sup>34</sup> Looking ahead to reconsolidation, it also called for the “reestablishment of the state administration over the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.”<sup>35</sup>

Fighting continued despite the ceasefire. President Laurent Kabil was assassinated in 2001 and his son, Joseph Kabil, took over as President. Joseph Kabil eventually agreed to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City, South Africa in 2002. The talks also stalled, this time over disagreements of how to integrate rebels into the military.<sup>36</sup> A peace deal to end the conflict was finally reached in late 2002 in Pretoria: the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement. This agreement joined the main belligerents, civil society, and the unarmed political opposition in a Transitional Government, which was implemented in July 2003.

### *Politics Below the Surface*

As negotiations tried to moderate rebels by building stakes in the political process, another game was underway. Armed groups spread into official institutions even before the end of the war.

Rebel leaders were not simply non-state actors. Many were prior regime elites who fought for their reintegration into the state.<sup>37</sup> Rebels

recognized the value of state affiliation and stylized themselves as the state. They referred to their movements as “the state” and appointed “presidents” and internal “ministries” that mimicked the national government.<sup>38</sup> As Dennis Tull points out, this state-like image helped to earn rebels seats at negotiations in Lusaka in the first place.<sup>39</sup>

More than just an image, rebels used state bureaus in their territory as tools to finance the war. At the same time that peace agreements tried to incorporate insurgents into national-level political institutions, rebels were *already* dividing administrative spoils. Two months into the war, the RCD instructed taxation bureaus to remain open.<sup>40</sup> Rebels’ internal financial records demonstrate that bureaucrats in official agencies collected taxes throughout the war and deposited these funds into the RCD’s “Public Treasury” and “War Effort” accounts.<sup>41</sup> And, as talks for the Lusaka Agreement were ongoing, Uganda also arranged for state taxation bureaus to finance its proxies, the MLC and RCD/K-ML. It tasked branches of three of the DRC’s taxation agencies with collecting revenue for rebels’ “General Treasury Accounts.”<sup>42</sup> Informal networks in these offices also joined bureaucracy with violence. For its part, the RCD/K-ML drew on ties with bureaucrats in customs agencies to convert prefinancing—a system of under-the-table kickbacks between local bureaucrats and smugglers—into a channel of financing.<sup>43</sup>

Peace accords called for the “reestablishment of the state administration,” but rebels co-opted the same administrations that the accords aimed to rebuild. In fact, peace agreements may have exacerbated these practices. The Lusaka Agreement recognized de facto frontlines, which lent a measure of international legitimacy to belligerents in their military holdings. Rebels invoked the Lusaka Agreement to legitimize their claims to natural resources and taxation rights in their territory. In various taxation edicts issued to local partners and foreign businesses, the RCD often invoked this legitimacy with the following clause: “Considering that the terms of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Rally for Congolese Democracy has the power to administer the territory under its control.”<sup>44</sup> Rebels also used Lusaka to build a veneer of legality on its mineral trade. The RCD President wrote to the Prime Minister of Belgium, insisting on its legitimate right to control mining practices: “By the terms of this Lusaka Agreement... each signatory belligerent party is able to administer the territory under its control. The administrative acts promulgated by the RCD are thus covered by this Accord.”<sup>45</sup>

Boundaries between state and non-state armed actors broke down in other ways. Kabila enlisted Mayi-Mayi groups on his behalf. Midway through the war, he also sponsored the RCD/K-ML to reduce Ugandan influence and gain an ally in the east. Doing so complicated peace agreements because signatories could act through non-state agents.<sup>46</sup>

### *Power Sharing and National Elections: The DRC's Transitional Government (2003–2006)*

War officially ended in mid-2003 with the launch of the Transitional Government. The architects of the transition anticipated that political institutions could build peace and integrate combatants from the DRC's divided society. The transition implemented the power-sharing formula laid out by the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, and international attention focused largely on supporting the agreement in the capital, Kinshasa.

The transitional government struck a compromise between Kabila and the national army, rebel groups (MLC, RCD, RCD/K-ML, and the RCD-N), and Mayi-Mayi militias. The compromise created four vice presidencies shared among the RCD, MLC, civil society, and the unarmed political opposition. Former belligerents were awarded lucrative ministerial appointments and officially relinquished control over combatants, who integrated into the national military. Military integration aimed to limit the ability to resume mass-scale violence. Goals of solidifying peace, good governance, and political stability were measured through progress to national elections. An International Committee for Support of the Transition supported the government, and the first round of national elections was held in 2006.

### *Politics Below the Surface*

The DRC's political opposition was dissatisfied with the transition and quickly dubbed the president and four vice-president arrangement as “ $1 + 4 = 0$ .”<sup>47</sup> More than political discontent, the underlying assumption that state institutions provided buffers against violence did not fully hold. The transition divided state posts among competitors who sustained clandestine networks within official institutions. Parallel command chains persisted in the national army and fed new rebellion, and parallel networks in the bureaucracy maintained wartime taxation for rebels' influence.

Armed groups were supposed to form mixed units under a joint military commission in Kinshasa, but an integrated national army did not break down relatively autonomous networks of former belligerents. Rebel groups did not fully dismantle their command chains.<sup>48</sup> Once they entered the national army, many combatants maintained the same bases and commanders as during the war. The national army changed officers in South Kivu, but rank-and-file troops remained in place.<sup>49</sup> Further north, the RCD/K-ML president still controlled most of his troops along the Uganda border in North Kivu.<sup>50</sup>

Parallel networks sometimes fed outright rebellion, as was the case with the RCD. With their minority status, Banyarwanda RCD leaders held few chances of earning power electorally. Hardliners wanted military action, and some former commanders refused positions in Kinshasa.<sup>51</sup> Disagreements over military command chains erupted in clashes in the eastern DRC's Kivu provinces in 2004.<sup>52</sup> Former RCD members used wartime networks to organize troops and weapons for a new rebellion, the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP). In early 2004, the CNDP attacked Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, exposing the government's inability to manage parallel chains, and reaping "irreparable damage" on the transitional government.<sup>53</sup> The RCD's Vice President in Kinshasa temporarily suspended his participation in the government.<sup>54</sup> Kabila dispatched brigades of former MLC troops, playing wartime rivalries against ex-RCD fighters. RCD deputies left parliament, and the UN mission established a buffer zone between government and rebels.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, military salaries often went unpaid. Government loyalists and former belligerents inflated numbers on military payrolls, creating opportunities to embezzle payments.<sup>56</sup>

Other spoilers operated from state administrations. Rebels' trafficking partners still ran war economies from former strongholds, and local bureaucrats kicked back state revenue to former rebels.<sup>57</sup> Customs bureaus in MLC territory did not remit revenue to Kinshasa through 2005.<sup>58</sup> Parallel taxes persisted in North Kivu's capital, Goma, where Banyarwanda networks opposing Kinshasa embezzled from public institutions.<sup>59</sup> Officials in the provincial administration provided under-the-table exemptions to powerful businesses to avoid customs duties. Bureaucrats in RCD/K-ML territory in northern North Kivu also maintained wartime taxation schemes,<sup>60</sup> defying Kinshasa's instructions to halt these deals.<sup>61</sup>

Persisting wartime networks in the bureaucracy held security implications. The Governor of North Kivu (who the RCD appointed during

the war) and local government members used state funds to arm the CNDP.<sup>62</sup> RCD/K-ML affiliates also describe using public revenue from customs bureaus to fund active troops to maintain relative autonomy over former holdings.<sup>63</sup> Parallel chains of power within the state apparatus linking bureaucrats, troops, and politicians undermined a cohesive national government and placed a check on Kinshasa's power.

The DRC held elections in 2006, meeting the international benchmark for a successful transition. Yet, revenue diversions and patronage opportunities in official bureaus seemed a surer route to power than clear party platforms. In the lead-up to the elections, politicians believed "control over the administrative apparatus may be more important in the election than personal popularity."<sup>64</sup> An international focus on elections and formal power-sharing institutions overlooked these densely interwoven networks between armed actors and state offices.

### EVOLUTION OF UN PEACEBUILDING (2006–2017): "*RESTORING STATE AUTHORITY*"

Multi-party elections marked the end of transition, and the UN peacekeeping mission turned its focus toward stabilization. As a UN mission official wrote, "At the root of the conflict are structural factors which keep the state weak."<sup>65</sup> With areas of rebellion seen as lacking viable institutions, the UN mission set about "restoring state authority" to lay a foundation for peace.<sup>66</sup>

The mission, United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), was originally deployed in 2000 to enforce the ceasefire agreement. As part of its mandate, it was also tasked with providing humanitarian assistance to displaced persons and refugees and with overseeing the withdrawal of foreign forces.<sup>67</sup> During the Transitional Government, MONUC's mandate expanded from ceasefire observation to supporting elections, security sector reform, disarming combatants, and enforcing the arms embargo.<sup>68</sup> After the 2006 elections, its mandate grew again, this time to support state authority in persisting conflict zones in the country's eastern provinces. Matching this goal, MONUC transformed into the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in 2010, reflecting "stabilization" as one of its core objectives.

This shift evolved alongside the failure of conventional approaches to end protracted conflict. The CNDP's military threat against Kinshasa

had grown, and international diplomats convened failed peace talks in 2007 and 2008.<sup>69</sup> Scrambling to integrate the CNDP, the UN called for more robust intervention.<sup>70</sup> When CNDP eventually ended in 2009, MONUSCO focused on engaging the provincial and central government more closely to stabilize remaining conflict zones. To guide its efforts, MONUSCO formulated its “International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy.” As the UN mission described, this strategy was:

modeled after counterinsurgency principles, whereby military operations to “clear” areas from armed groups were followed by “holding and building” the state... The underlying assumption was that security vacuums caused by a lack of [state] capacity were exploited by armed groups, and that by strengthening local institutions the state could start taking the situation in hand.<sup>71</sup>

The first phase of the strategy (2008–2012) focused on building state infrastructure and institutions in areas that had been “cleared” from rebels.<sup>72</sup> The UN focused on physical infrastructure that could expand the reach of the government. It built new roads—a standard metric of state power<sup>73</sup>—to lengthen the arm of the state and control “axes of communication” in remote areas.<sup>74</sup> The approach incorporated a role for the national army (Armed Forces of Democratic Republic of the Congo, FARDC): “FARDC and MONUSCO must liberate the zones from armed groups, then infrastructure will be built.” To support state institutions in “liberated” zones, MONUSCO constructed administrative buildings and organized trainings for police, judges, and administrative personnel. Then, bureaucrats would be “deployed along these axes, using rehabilitated infrastructure and implementing the lessons learned during their training.”<sup>75</sup>

In 2013, MONUSCO took its “counterinsurgency” state-building to the next level. During the previous year, another large-scale rebellion had organized in eastern DRC: the *Mouvement du 23 Mars* (M23).<sup>76</sup> The M23 seized Goma for several days, fueling charges that MONUSCO could not protect civilians.<sup>77</sup> UN personnel saw that a “security vacuum presents an opportunity for multiple, competing armed groups to flourish,” and pressure mounted to equip MONUSCO for a more effective use of force.<sup>78</sup> The UN Security Council responded by creating MONUSCO’s Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in 2013.<sup>79</sup>

The FIB is an offensive military unit with a mandate to “neutralize” armed groups, typically through joint operations with the FARDC. From this time, MONUSCO viewed military campaigns as tools to support state authority—introducing a “state-making as war-making” logic into peacekeeping.

The FIB and FARDC began joint military operations against the M23 and defeated the group in 2013.<sup>80</sup> With the campaign heralded as a success, the FIB turned its sights northward to combat another long-standing armed group: the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Here, MONUSCO and its FIB applied the same principles that shaped its overall stabilization strategy: the campaign imagined clear lines separating zones of state authority from zones under the control of non-state armed groups.

### *Politics Below the Surface*

The approach aimed to build peace by extending the reach of official security and administrative institutions into conflict zones. Yet, the complicity between armed groups and bureaucratic and military officeholders undermined MONUSCO’s stabilization attempts.

These difficulties compromised some of MONUSCO’s institutional partners. To implement its stabilization strategy, MONUSCO partnered with the “STAREC” government bureau (Stabilization and Reconstruction Programme for War-Affected Areas).<sup>81</sup> And yet, the FARDC military General appointed to the bureau in northern North Kivu used his position to re-establish links with armed groups, including the ADF.<sup>82</sup> A military General by official status, he operated more as a warlord in practice by amassing combatants and dominating smuggling. Local sources describe how equipment that MONUSCO provided to build roads to “restore state authority” in the area was used to support timber trafficking with active combatants.<sup>83</sup>

The UN’s militarized attempts at state-building met the same dilemma. MONUSCO and FARDC launched joint operations against the ADF in early 2014.<sup>84</sup> The operations followed clear-cut counterinsurgency principles that treated non-state armed actors as the root of conflict. Yet, the ADF had survived decades in the borderlands of northern North Kivu by laying ties with local civilians and political authorities.<sup>85</sup> It also drew support from some FARDC military officers that provided weapons, intelligence, and uniforms in exchange for trafficking opportunities and access

to combatants.<sup>86</sup> These shadow arrangements created mixed incentives within FARDC to fight the ADF. Just days into the operation, some FARDC officers who supported ADF worked with the rebels to attack and kill the head of the military campaign.<sup>87</sup>

This meant that some of the most dangerous security threats came from within the national army. However, MONUSCO's mandate to support state authority created difficulties in understanding these sources of violence. In 2014, a string of mass killings broke out during operations against ADF. The attacks represented the worst violence in the DRC in a decade and killed at least 1,300 civilians.<sup>88</sup> The UN mission attributed the killings to the ADF, but investigative teams found that some FARDC military officers also held responsibility.<sup>89</sup> This included the head of the military campaign against ADF, General Mundos. According to the Group of Experts, General Mundos recruited ADF fighters to perpetrate some of the killings and "financed and equipped the group with weapons, ammunition and FARDC uniforms."<sup>90</sup> Other evidence demonstrated that some local state authorities, including administrative and customary chiefs, also helped organize some of the killings.<sup>91</sup> Violence escalated to attacks on MONUSCO bases. Investigators found that corrupt members of state security services supported the Mayi-Mayi group behind the first attack on the UN mission.<sup>92</sup>

The UN sought to build peace by restoring state influence against non-state security threats. But this approach did not account for the role of the complicit state. In reality, the UN supported a military with weak incentives to secure civilians. MONUSCO relied on the national army for intelligence against armed groups, at the same time that parallel networks supported armed groups behind the backs of the mission. In light of these interactions, the UN's clear lines between state authority and sources of violence obscured the more blurred allegiances and informal networks that shaped official institutions and insecurity. These interactions form part of a broader array of armed groups that rely on state security forces and political figures. FARDC officers have co-opted Mayi-Mayi militias as proxies to execute violence against civilians in conflict-affected areas of South Kivu and the Kasais.<sup>93</sup> These arrangements provide plausible deniability for state authorities while also feeding the violence that state authorities can use to demonstrate a need for support from international donors.

## CONCLUSION

The permeability of political institutions and armed actors makes state-building more complex than it might appear. This has implications for designing political settlements and measuring their success. Political settlements assume that integrating into the government signals a willingness to lay down arms. To be effective, power sharing must be costly and make credible commitments to demobilization.<sup>94</sup> But integrating into state institutions does not just incur costs for rebels. In protracted and complex conflicts, violence may be built into official political institutions. By the time the Second Congo War concluded, rebels were already practiced at using bureaucratic offices to support violence. Persistent war economies, parallel networks within the national military, and kickbacks from taxation agencies blurred the line between state and armed actors. Dividing former belligerents into hardliners versus moderates, as power-sharing arrangements do, also assumes these divisions are easy to observe. In practice, mafia-like networks and support for armed actors may be less legible. Defecting and remobilizing rebellion are seen as the main ways that former belligerents may disrupt peace settlements, but they select from a wider menu of options to use state institutions and affiliation to sustain violence.

These practices recall key lessons on warlord and predatory states.<sup>95</sup> State-building solutions to conflict cast security threats as emanating from insurgents outside the state, but threats also come from within. This reality helps us to analyze how political decisions are made. In the DRC, President Kabila coped with parallel networks in the national military by perpetually forming new units of the presidential guard—creating more fragmentation within official structures.<sup>96</sup> Contending with parallel networks within the bureaucracy also undermines the central government’s willingness to rely on official institutions for its own rule.<sup>97</sup> In this sense, conflicts such as the DRC’s unfold in “intentionally fragile states,” where political leaders may have their own incentives to undermine the same institutions that peacebuilders try to support.<sup>98</sup>

The DRC also cautions analysts against casting the actors behind violence in too narrow terms: bureaucrats and soldiers can feed rebellion as much as fighters in the jungle. For diplomats, foreign governments, and international organizations, this creates a difficult puzzle. International audiences face a catch-22: they may be unable to support official institutions without supporting the networks—sometimes violent—embedded

within them. Moreover, foreign governments and international organizations like the UN are reluctant to implicate state actors in such activities. Recognizing the porous nature of state institutions can place diplomats on contentious ground, since they must also balance norms of legal recognition for the state actors that use official institutions in these ways.

Finally, the DRC's experience underscores that state-building will be deeply political, not a technocratic exercise in training bureaucrats or building roads. Operating effectively in these environments will require practitioners to understand the political logic and rules of the game.<sup>99</sup> International policymakers operate in scenarios of captured state-building, where local elites may seek resources for their own agendas while limiting real reform to their own practices.<sup>100</sup> However, to date, no comprehensive strategy or approach exists to account for this difficulty. As civil wars increasingly break out in very weak and fragmented states,<sup>101</sup> it is more important than ever to understand how this porous border is shaped.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The experience of peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo offers three key policy recommendations.

1. *Deepen understanding of insurgents.* Policymakers and practitioners should reconsider the strategies and resources that insurgents use. Instead of avoiding the state, violent actors can use its institutions to build their influence.
2. *Revisit established approaches to institution-building.* Policymakers and practitioners should think more critically about institution-building. Policymakers aim to expand the *degree* of the state, but have given less attention to what *kind* of state this may be.<sup>102</sup> Policymakers must take seriously the political programs, informal networks, and day-to-day practices that shape official institutions.<sup>103</sup>
3. *Develop more nuanced metrics of what constitutes successful peace-building.* Peacebuilding success is often measured by the duration of settlements,<sup>104</sup> but a narrow focus on avoiding outright rebellion can overlook the networks and institutions that also enable violence.

## NOTES

1. The First Congo War (1996–1997) and the Second Congo War (1998–2003).
2. “Children and Armed Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” Report of the Secretary-General, United Nations Security Council, S/2018/502, 25 May 2018, para. 4. The Kivu Security Tracker estimates that the number of armed groups operating in Congo rose to at least 130 by 2019, up from an estimated 120 groups in 2017 and an estimated 70 groups in 2015. “Congo Forgotten: The Numbers Behind Africa’s Longest Humanitarian Crisis,” Congo Research Group, August 2019.
3. “Democratic Republic of the Congo: 2017 Human Rights Report,” United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor; “Human Rights Watch Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the Democratic Republic of Congo,” Human Rights Watch, October 2018. On the December 2019 national elections that brought President Felix Tshisekedi to power, see Pierre Englebert, “The Congo’s Electoral Sideshow,” *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 3: 124–138.
4. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, “Understanding the Contradictions of Postwar Statebuliding,” in *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, Paris and Sisk (eds.) (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1–20.
5. E.g., Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); James Fearon and David Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil Wars,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90; William Zartman (ed.), *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995).
6. Kimberley Zisk Marten, *Enforcing the Peace: Learning from the Imperial Past* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004); Paris and Sisk, *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding*.
7. Paris and Sisk, “Understanding the Contradictions of Postwar Statebuliding,” 1–2.
8. For implications on peacekeeping, see for example, Alex de Waal, “Mission Without End: Peacekeeping in the African Political Marketplace,” *International Affairs* 85, no. 1 (2009).
9. “Nous sommes la nouvelle jeunesse africaine engagée” Filimbi, Lucha, Y’en a Marre, Balai Citoyen (RDC, Sénégal, Burkina Faso), *Le Monde*, 17 April 2015; “Boulevard of Broken Dreams: The ‘Street’ and Politics in DR Congo,” Africa Briefing 123, International Crisis Group (Nairobi and Brussels, 13 October 2016).

10. Civil wars often ended through military victories during the Cold War, due in part to external sponsorship of insurgents or governments. With dwindling sponsorship after the Cold War, neither side had the decisive military advantage, creating more protracted wars that tended to be resolved through negotiations.
11. Denis M. Tull and Andreas Mehler, "The Hidden Costs of Power-Sharing: Reproducing Insurgent Violence in Africa," *African Affairs* 104, no. 416 (2005): 375–398.
12. Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, "Institutionalizing Peace: Power Sharing and Post-Civil War Conflict Management," *American Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 2 (2003); Donald Rothchild and Philip G. Roeder, "Dilemmas of State-Building in Divided Societies," in *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars*, Roeder and Rothchild (eds.) (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 2005), 1–25.
13. The incentive structure of power sharing can also encourage elites to escalate demands and create coalition governments vulnerable to deadlock. Tull and Mehler, "The Hidden Costs of Power-Sharing," 2005; Roeder and Rothchild, "Dilemmas of State-Building," 2005.
14. Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
15. Paris and Sisk, *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding*, 2009.
16. Robert Gates, U.S. Secretary of Defense, "Helping Others Defend Themselves: The Future of U.S. Security Assistance," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2010.
17. A phrase borrowed from Alex de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).
18. Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999); and Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States And Industrial Transformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998).
19. Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
20. Mobutu held power from 1965–1997. Originally Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, he changed his name to Mobutu Sese Seko and renamed Congo "Zaire" as part of an Africanization policy. From 1971 to 1997, Congo was known as Zaire.
21. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, 2000.
22. Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life During War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

23. James Fairhead, "Paths of Authority: Roads, the State and the Market in Eastern Zaire," *European Journal of Development Research* (1992); Catherine Newbury, "Dead and Buried or Just Underground? The Privatization of the State in Zaire," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 18, no. 1 (1984): 112–114; Theodore Trefon, *Parcours administratif dans un état en faillite: récits populaires de Lubumbashi* (RDC) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007).
24. Pierre Englebert, *Africa: Unity, Sovereignty, Sorrow* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009).
25. Zaire "Freedom in the World: Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1995–1996," Freedom House (New York, 1996).
26. Including under the Bakajika land law. On the Kivus, see Jean-Claude Willame, *Banyarwanda et Banyamulenge: Violences Ethniques et Gestion de l'Identitaire au Kivu* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997) and R. Ruddy Doom and J. Goris (eds.), *Politics of Identity and Economics of Conflict in the Great Lakes Region* (Brussels: VUB University Press, 2000). On Hema-Lendu conflicts in Ituri, see Johan Pottier, "Representations of Ethnicity in the Search for Peace: Ituri, Democratic Republic of Congo," *African Affairs* 109, no. 434 (2010): 23–50.
27. Meanwhile, ethnic associations, known as *mutuelles*, increased support for local militias. See Koen Vlassenroot and Hans Romkema, "The Emergence of a New Order? Resources and War in Eastern Congo," *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance* (October 2002).
28. On the First and Second Congo Wars, see Gérard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, The Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Collapse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Jason Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).
29. Prunier, *Africa's World War*, 2011.
30. Despite a broader founding leadership coalition. Denis Tull, "A Reconfiguration of Political Order? The State of the State in North Kivu (DR Congo)," *African Affairs* 102 (2003): 429–446.
31. On Mayi-Mayi, see Frank van Acker and Koen Vlassenroot, "Les 'Mai-Mai' et les Fonctions de la Violence Milicienne dans l'Est du Congo," *Politique Africaine* 84, no. 103 (2001): 103–116.
32. Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, Annex A, Chapter 5, Arts 5.1 and 5.2.b. available at [http://www.usip.org/library/pa/Congo/Congo\\_07101999\\_toc.html](http://www.usip.org/library/pa/Congo/Congo_07101999_toc.html). For further analysis, see also Tull and Mehler, "Hidden Costs of Power-Sharing," 2005, and Jean-Claude Willame, *Les Faiseurs de la Paix au Congo: gestion d'une crise internationale dans un état sous tutelle* (Brussels: GRIP, 2007).

33. "The Agreement on a Cease-Fire in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An Analysis of the Agreement and Prospects for Peace," Crisis Group Africa Report (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 1999).
34. Mayi-Mayi were not involved in the process and stated they would not accept an agreement in which they had not participated. Prunier, *Africa's World War*, 2011.
35. Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, Chapter 6.
36. They did not resolve the issue of the balance of power within the national army, kicking the issue down the road to the transition government. Judith Verweijen, "Half-Brewed: The Lukewarm Results of Creating an Integrated Military in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," in *New Armies from Old: Merging Competing Military Forces after Civil Wars*, Roy Licklider (ed.) (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 137–162, 141.
37. Tull, "A Reconfiguration of Political Order?," 2003; Tull and Mehler, "Hidden Costs of Power Sharing," 2005. On elite recycling among rebel leaders see Christopher Clapham, "Introduction," in Clapham, *African Guerillas*, 5; William Reno, "The Politics of Insurgency in Collapsing States," *Development and Change* 33, no. 5 (2002): 837–858.
38. Tull, "A Reconfiguration of Political Order?," 2003; Rachel Sweet, "The Resilient State: Bureaucrats at War in the Congo," Working Paper under review, 2018.
39. Tull, "A Reconfiguration of Political Order?," 2003.
40. "Instruction No003/DF/RCD/98/Aux Institutions Bancaires et Financières," Département des Finances, RCD, 20 October 1998, Goma.
41. Over 1,000 RCD bank statements gathered during fieldwork by this author. E.g., "Recettes enregistrées le 03.04.2001" Banque du Zaire [Statement to the Attention of le Chef du Département des Finances, Budget et Portefeuille du R.C.D. Goma], Goma, 3 April 2001.
42. The agreement named OFIDA, DGC and DGRAD taxation bureaus as responsible for mobilizing funds for the MLC and RCD/K-ML. "Protocole d'Accord," signed by Jean Pierre Bemba of the MLC and Ernest Wamba dia Wamba of the RCD-K [later, RCD/K-ML], 30 July 1999, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Witnessed by four officers of the Ugandan People's Defense Forces (Brig. Gen. Kazini, Maj. Mayombo, Col. Otafire, and Amb. Marwa).
43. Timothy Raeymaekers, *Violent Capitalism and Hybrid Identity in Eastern Congo: Power to the Margins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
44. E.g., "Arrêté Interdépartemental No 002/RCD/CE-DFBP-DTME/2003 Modifiant et Complétant le Régime Fiscal Applicable aux Comptoirs d'Achat et d'Exportation de Substances Minérales d'Exploitation Artisanale," Département des Finances, Budget et Portefeuille

- et Département des Terres, Mines, et Energie, RCD, 26 February 2003, Goma.
45. Adolphe Onusumba Yemba [Letter to His Excellency the Prime Minister of Belgium, in Brussels] Cabinet Unique de la Présidence et du Secrétariat General du RCD, 21 November 2002, Goma.
  46. Verweijen, "Half-Brewed," 2014, 138.
  47. See, for instance, Modeste Paulin Mba Talla, "Emergence 'fragmégration' et perpétuation des rebellions au Congo-RDC (1990–2010): Une politologie des groupes armés," Ph.D. Diss. (University of Ottawa, 2012), 338.
  48. "The Congo's Transition is Failing: Crisis in the Kivus," Crisis Group Africa Report N°91 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, March 2005); Jason Stearns, "From CNDP to M23: The Evolution of an Armed Movement in Eastern Congo" (Rift Valley Institute, 2012); Verweijen, "Half-Brewed," 2014, 138.
  49. "The Congo's Transition Is Failing," International Crisis Group, 2005, 4.
  50. Ibid., 2.
  51. Notably, Gen. Laurent Nkunda, Col. Eric Ruohimbere and Col. Elie Gishondo.
  52. "The Congo's Transition is Failing," International Crisis Group, 2005; Stearns, "From CNDP to M23," 2012.
  53. Rwanda support for hardliners also fomented resistance. "The Congo's Transition Is Failing," International Crisis Group, 2005, 6.
  54. Ibid., 10.
  55. Ibid., 6.
  56. Ibid., 17.
  57. A UN panel described some of the persisting trafficking: Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, S/2005/30 (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2005); Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, S/2005/436 (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2005).
  58. "OFIDA: enfin, l'administration douanière de Gemena à nouveau sous la dépendance de la haute direction nationale à Kinshasa," Radio Okapi, 15 October 2005. As International Crisis Group described, in January 2005, the MLC "threatened to withdraw from the transition unless Kabila shared control of the lucrative state-run enterprises and the local administration as was agreed at Sun City. The only integration that has taken place so far has been through the appointment of provincial governors and vice governors. All other officials remain in place, often with strong loyalties to the former belligerents." "The Congo's Transition Is Failing," 2005, 17.

59. “The Congo’s Transition is Failing,” International Crisis Group, 2005, 11, 13–14.
60. Discussed in bureaucratic correspondences, e.g., “Usurpation des attributions et non application des instructions,” Office des Douanes et Accises (OFIDA) Sous Direction de Beni [Letter No 001/VERIFICATION/2004 to the Sub-director of OFIDA in Beni], 8 July 2004, Beni. See also Tegera, Aloys and Dominic Johnson, “Rules for Sale: Formal and Informal Cross-Border Trade in Eastern Congo” (Goma: The Pole Institute, May 2007).
61. “Note Circulaire No 009/CAB/MIN/FINANCES/2003,” Government of Congo, 29 December 2003, Kinshasa.
62. On Governor Eugene Serufuli’s involvement with CNDP, see “The Congo’s Transition Is Failing,” International Crisis Group, 2005, 10–11.
63. Personal Interview with former RCD/K-ML combatant, 25 October 2015, Beni; Personal Interview with RCD/K-ML cadre member, 22 January 2016, Butembo; Congo Research Group Interviewee Z-6, 29 November 2016, Kasindi; Congo Research Group Interviewee Z-4, Mutwanga, 15 November 2016; Congo Research Group Interviewee Z-10-B, Beni, 19 February 2017; “Arms flows in Eastern DR Congo,” All Party Parliamentary Group on the Great Lakes Region, Report pursuant to Security Council Res. 1533 (Government of the United Kingdom, December 2004), 27
64. “The Congo’s Transition Is Failing,” International Crisis Group, 2005, 17.
65. Bolstering government power was also expected to provide the international community with an exit strategy from Congo. “The International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2013–2017),” MONUSCO, 5.
66. “Reconstructing Public Administration After Conflict: Challenges, Practices, and Lessons Learnt,” World Public Sector Report (New York: United Nations, 2010); for the UN mission in Congo: “The International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2013–2017),” MONUSCO, 30
67. Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, Chapter 8: United Nations Peace-Keeping Mandate.
68. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1565, October 2004, S/RES/1565 (2004).
69. “You Will be Punished: Attacks on Civilians in Eastern Congo” (Human Rights Watch: New York, December 2009), 33–34, 39–40. Negotiations included the 2007 Nairobi Communiqué between Rwanda and Congo and the 2008 Goma *Actes d’Engagement* that gathered 22 armed groups. The 23 March 2009 agreement between the Government of Congo, CNDP, and 14 local armed groups reintegrated belligerents.

- Parallel networks persisted in the national army, giving rise to the M23 rebellion in 2012. Stearns, "From CNDP to M23," 2012.
70. Including calls for more troop deployments and an intervention force.
  71. "The International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (2013–2017)," MONUSCO, 12.
  72. A second phase from 2013–2017 incorporated a focus on governance and critiqued the overly technical approach of the first. As MONUSCO described the change in 2013, "For too long we have handled conflicts in Eastern Congo with technical responses. We have focused on training civil servants, construction of administrative buildings (police stations, courts etc.) and road rehabilitations. Even worse when it comes to roads; in most cases we did not asphalt them and since they have deteriorated due to the rainy season and/or lack of maintenance by the state. Millions of dollars have been spent on 'hardware' activities/projects with no concrete results and lack of political engagement from the state to ensure that these initiatives are sustainable and fit within their own planning strategies. Overall, we cannot expect technical responses only in response to complex political problems." "The ISSSS: An Innovative Stabilisation Strategy for Eastern Congo," Stabilisation Support Unit, MONUSCO, Goma, 2013. The second phase was organized around five key goals, or pillars: Democratic Dialogue; Security; Restoring State Authority; Return, Reintegration and Socio-Economic recovery; and Fighting Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.
  73. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, 2000.
  74. "Que Constitue un Zone," STAREC et ISSSS, Stabilization Support Unit, MONUSCO, Goma, August 2014.
  75. Ibid. The ISSSS also focused on disarming and demobilizing combatants and training state security forces.
  76. The M23 was the successor group to the CNDP and earlier RCD. Its name reflects dissatisfaction with the March 23 accords that reintegrated CNDP into government and military posts. See Stearns, "From CNDP to M23," 2012.
  77. This followed criticisms over the UN's inability to protect civilians or deter armed groups. The UN also failed to defend Goma from the CNDP in 2008 and Goma and Bukavu in 2004. Its failure to protect civilians is critiqued back to the Second Congo War. "The Congo's Transition Is Failing," International Crisis Group, 2005, 23–25.
  78. "The International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (2013–2017)," MONUSCO, 10.
  79. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2098, 8 March 2013, S/RES/2098 (2013). The FIB was based on an idea proposed by the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region and supported by the Southern African Development Community. In February 2013, the Government of Congo and nine other African countries called for an

- intervention force at the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The FIB was created in March 2013.
80. The M23 ended with the Kampala Negotiations. The connections between M23 and the Rwandan regime made it a rallying point for Congolese national identity and created popular support for the military offensive against it.
  81. The Government of Congo created STAREC in 2010 to consolidate the security gains made under the March 23 agreement that ended the CNDP rebellion. MONUSCO designed the ISSSS to support STAREC. MONUSCO partnered with STAREC in 2010 and maintains the partnership to present-day.
  82. Kakolele Bwambale was appointed to STAREC in Beni from 2010 to 2012, following his stint with the CNDP and before his support for the M23 rebellion. Implicating Kakolele in using this position to reestablish links with the ADF: Congo Research Group Interview V-2 with former RCD/K-ML commander (and active rebel leader, 2010–2012), Kinshasa, 18 January 2017; Personal Interview with Congolese national intelligence official V-A, Entebbe, Uganda, October 2016; On Kakolele's involvement with combatants at this time, Interview F-28 with local chief at Eringeti, Mbau, 4 October 2015; Interview with active combatant Z-34, Beni, 1 March 2017.
  83. On the use of tractors to support armed actors: Interview with Virunga National Park official T-3, Goma, 16 January 2017; Interview local chief S-A, Beni, 20 January 2017; Interview F-28 with local chief at Eringeti, Mbau, 4 October 2015; Interview with Congolese national intelligence official V-A, Entebbe, Uganda, 17 October 2016.
  84. The military campaign is known as Operation Sukola I.
  85. “Governing from the Shadows,” Congo Research Group (New York, *forthcoming*); Hans Romkema, “Opportunities and Constraints for the Disarmament and Repatriation of Foreign Armed Groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Cases of the FDLR, FNL and ADF/NALU,” World Bank Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Program, June 2007; Titeca, Kristof, and Koen Vlassenroot, “Rebels Without Borders in the Ruwenzori Borderland? A Biography of the Allied Democratic Forces,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6, no. 1 (2012).
  86. Uniforms disguise rebels as FARDC soldiers to make them more difficult to identify in military operations. Describing “joint ventures” in timber trafficking between ADF and the national army, see Romkema, “Opportunities and Constraints for the Disarmament and Repatriation of Foreign Armed Groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” 2007. UN Security Council investigative panels have also documented links between FARDC and ADF in timber trafficking: Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, S/2011/738 (2 December 2011), para. 58; Final Report of the Group

- of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, S/2012/843 (15 November 2002), para. 107.
87. This January 2014 ambush killed FARDC Col. Mamadou Ndala. Mamadou had led the joint operations against M23 before moving northward to fight the ADF. A military tribunal charged multiple FARDC officers with supplying the ADF with weapons and uniforms and with Mamadou's assassination. "Arret Mamadou: PRO-JUSTITIA ARRET," Cour Militaire Operationnelle du Nord-Kivu, République Democratique du Congo Justice Militaire; RP N° 015°; 017°et 018/014 RMP N° 0385°; 0418 et0419 / BBM/014.
88. "Mass Killings in Beni Territory: Political Violence, Cover Ups and Cooptation," Congo Research Group (New York: September 2017).
89. Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations Security Council, S/2016/466, paras. 201–204. Mass Killings in Beni Territory: Political Violence, Cover Ups and Cooptation," Congo Research Group (New York: September 2017).
90. Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations Security Council, S/2016/466, para. 201. See also "Mass Killings in Beni Territory," Congo Research Group, 2017. In February 2018, the UN Security Council sanctioned Mundos for organizing killings and collaborating with ADF.
91. "Mass Killings in Beni Territory," Congo Research Group, 2017.
92. Forensic analysis of the bullets used in the December 2016 attack on MONUSCO in Butembo found that head stamps were consistent with FARDC or national police (PNC) stores. This attack was attributed to Mayi Mayi Kilalo, affiliated with FARDC General Bwambale Kakolele. Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations Security Council, S/2017/672 paras. 160–161 and 177–179.
93. Describing FARDC complicity in killing civilians in the Kasais, and the role of state security forces in funding militias to carry out killings in the Kasais. "Report of a Mission of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights—Accounts of Congolese Fleeing the Crisis in the Kasai Region, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (August 2017). For a recent example in South Kivu, see "The CNPSC Rebellion: Social Marginalization and State Complicity in South Kivu," Jason Stearns, Congo Research Group, 26 February 2019.
94. Hartzell and Hoddie, "Institutionalizing Peace," 2003.
95. See, for example, Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010, 2nd edition); de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*, 2015; Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 1998.
96. Beginning with the *Groupe Speciale de la Sécurité Présidentielle* (GSSP) during the transitional government.

97. Scholars will find similarities with Migdal's dilemma of strong societies and weak states. Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
98. "The International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy for the Democratic Republic of Congo," MONUSCO, 2013–2017, 5.
99. de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa*, 2015.
100. See Michael Barnett and Christoph Zürcher, "The Peacebuilder's Contract: How External Statebuilding Reinforces Weak Statehood," in Paris and Sisk (eds.), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding* (London: Routledge, 2009), 23–52.
101. Stathis Kalyvas and Laia Balcells, "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 3 (2010): 415–429.
102. Barnett and Zürcher, "The Peacebuilder's Contract."
103. Bayart, *The State in Africa*, 2010; Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works*, 1999; de Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power*, 2015; Timothy Raeymaekers, Ken Menkhaus, and Koen Vlassenroot, "State and Non-State Regulation in African Protracted Crises: Governance Without Government?," *Afrika Focus* 21, no. 2(2008): 7–21; Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 1998.
104. See, for instance, Karl DeRouen Jr., Jenna Lea, and Peter Wallensteen, "The Duration of Civil War Peace Agreements," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 26, no. 4(2009): 367–387.

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## CHAPTER 18

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# Violence, Peacebuilding, and Elite Bargains in Mozambique Since Independence

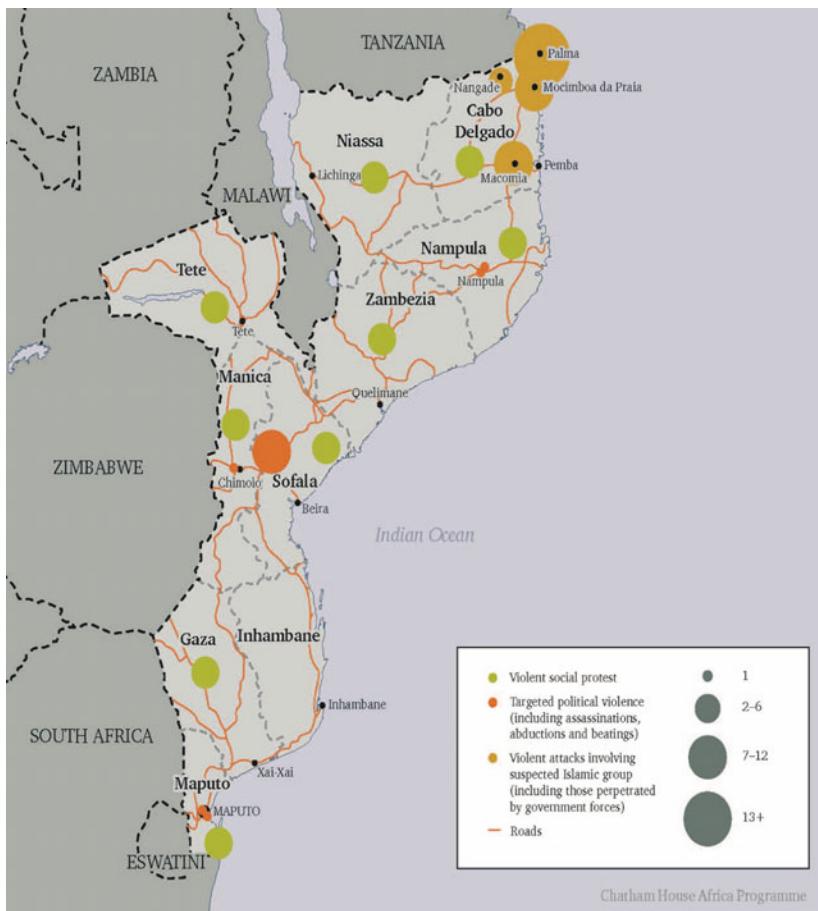
*Alex Vines*

## INTRODUCTION

Mozambique was considered a successful case of peacebuilding after the end of the devastating post-independence civil war that ended in 1992. But the return to targeted armed conflict in 2013 between the government and RENAMO and the need for a new peace process has challenged that assumption.<sup>1</sup> A new “definitive” peace agreement was finally signed between the government and RENAMO on August 6, 2019, but many Mozambicans question whether it will stick; and there is domestic and international anxiety over a growing violent crisis in northern Mozambique (Cabo Delgado Province, especially). Since late 2017, Mozambique has faced attacks by a violent Islamist extremist group that is active along its far northern coast. The group—known as Al Sunnah wa Jama’ah (ASWJ), among other names—has killed hundreds, often via beheading (Map 18.1).<sup>2</sup>

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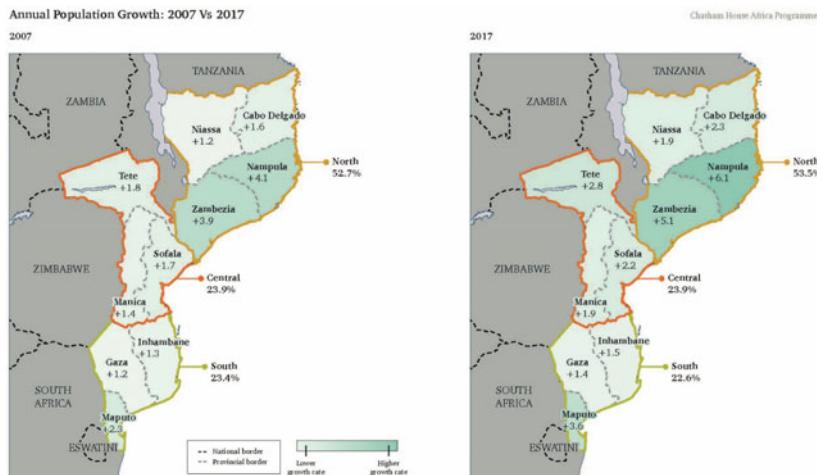
**Map 18.1** Violence and social protest, 2017–2019 (*Source* Chatham House Africa Programme, adapted from AIM, ACLED, and author interviews)

These new and resumed old conflicts are occurring at a time of significant population growth, deepening inequality, and growing frustration at mainstream politics in Mozambique. The optimism of much of the 2000s that followed the end of the civil war has evaporated; Mozambique remains one of the world's least developed countries, ranking 180th out

of 189 countries.<sup>3</sup> Up to 2019, its state finances have relied upon significant international loans, and until recently, development aid represented half of the state budget.<sup>4</sup>

Mozambique sustained rapid post-civil war growth with an annual average of 8.4 percent GDP growth until 2015. In 2016, however, growth fell to 3.8 percent from 6.6 percent in 2015, and in 2018 slumped further, to 3.3 percent. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has attributed this decline to weak global commodity prices, poor weather conditions, and “the issue of undisclosed loans in the spring of 2016 and the ensuing freeze in donor support.”<sup>5</sup> The RENAMO–government conflict also may have contributed to the slow-down and the effects of the two cyclones in 2019 have further reduced growth in the short to medium term.

The discovery of world-class gas reserves has generated renewed optimism about the country’s future. Natural gas production will drive large gains in economic growth from the mid-2020s to the early 2030s; but, rapid population growth, rising inequality, and the lack of access to basic services and infrastructure means that much of this growth may not benefit the poor (Map 18.2).<sup>6</sup>



**Map 18.2** Population growth (*Source* Chatham House Africa Programme)

Most Mozambicans, an estimated 86 percent or more of the workforce, make their living in the informal sector, often as subsistence and cash crop farmers, fishermen, and small-scale manufacturers and traders. Productivity within this large segment of the economy, however, is constrained by little access to credit, business training, or technical expertise. Youth unemployment is a particular challenge. Nearly 68 percent of Mozambicans are age 25 or younger, and many young people from rural areas, home to 65 percent of the population in 2017, often gravitate toward cities, where job growth has not kept up with increasing education and training rates—even though these are low.<sup>7</sup>

It is in this context that domestic and international peacebuilding efforts have occurred. There has never been one plan, but a collection of initiatives, at times incorporated into national strategies, at other times technical interventions to address a particular sector or priority.<sup>8</sup> This chapter examines the many domestic and international efforts to support peacebuilding efforts in Mozambique since 1975. It highlights that conflict and contestation did not start or end with the civil war but is an ongoing process, and that parts of Mozambique remained unstable despite the Rome General Peace Accord (GPA) of 1992 because state-centric approaches to peacebuilding largely failed.<sup>9</sup>

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Mozambique's history is deeply tied to complex regional politics (compounded by divisions between the center and the peripheries of the country) and failures in nation-building. For much of the colonial period up to 1942, Mozambique was divided into separate administrative zones, which fragmented the colony and prevented the emergence of a common system of law and administration. The location of the capital in the extreme south of the country, and the proximity of South Africa, concentrated resources and the modern sector of the economy in that region, while much of the rest of the country continued to be relatively marginalized.<sup>10</sup> The 1977–1992 civil war also helped to accentuate regional differences, with RENAMO's activities concentrated in the center of the country. The discovery of world-class gas reserves in northern Mozambique may further accentuate these regional differences.

Mozambique obtained independence in June 1975, following a nationalist struggle against Portuguese colonialism by FRELIMO.<sup>11</sup> In February 1977, FRELIMO formally declared its transformation from the

liberation movement into a Marxist–Leninist vanguard party. The decision came at a time when there were growing numbers of skirmishes between Mozambique and Rhodesia, and when the party was seeking to attract military aid from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup>

Following FRELIMO's rise to power, “purification” and persecution of those who had collaborated with the colonial regime led many Mozambicans to leave the country, some of whom joined RENAMO. FRELIMO increasingly found that it could not defeat RENAMO, partly as a result of its guerrilla tactics and partly because of the centralization of the state, which meant that many regions had never benefitted from a centralized government in Maputo and their politics and loyalties were regional and local as a result.

FRELIMO ended the one-party system in 1990. Yet, the party has continued as the dominant force in state and society, winning all six presidential and parliamentary elections.<sup>13</sup> Mozambique is not formally a one-party state, but the ruling party is still so deeply entrenched in the state apparatus that in practice it is still hard to separate one from the other. Similar to other “liberation movement states” in southern Africa, the party has blurred the interests of the movement, the state, and personal interests of key individuals. FRELIMO has always sought to keep a tight grip on political power.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Post-independence Civil War*

In 1976, Mozambique imposed sanctions against neighboring Rhodesia's white minority regime, which disrupted the Mozambican economy and deprived its ports of lucrative earnings. It also marked the start of hostile relations between the two countries: in 1977, the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Office (CIO) began to arm and train the nascent RENAMO opposition force—which at that point was called the MNR—in retaliation for Mozambique's support for Zimbabwe nationalist guerrillas.<sup>15</sup> This conflict can be broken down into different episodes<sup>16</sup>: the Rhodesian phase (1977–1980); the overt South African phase (1980–1984)<sup>17</sup>; the covert South African phase (1984–1988); and the post-South African phase until 1992.

*Failed Attempts to End the War*

The transfer of RENAMO to South Africa marked a turning point in the war, which soon began to escalate. The South African government used RENAMO as a tool for destabilizing Mozambique and as a counter to Mozambique's support for the African National Congress (ANC).<sup>18</sup> FRELIMO made a bid to end the war in 1984 when it signed the Nkomati non-aggression pact with Apartheid South Africa, followed by proximity talks in 1985 with RENAMO, but both failed due to South African duplicity. Indeed, RENAMO changed its military strategy as South Africa significantly reduced its covert aid to the rebels.<sup>19</sup> In 1986, Mozambique's first president, Samora Machel, was killed in a mysterious plane crash and Joaquim Chissano, Mozambique's foreign minister since independence, became president. This change in leadership led to a series of reforms and, ultimately, official peace negotiations with RENAMO that began in 1990.<sup>20</sup>

While the roots of the peace process began in 1982, South Africa's covert policy of support for RENAMO had eroded earlier attempts to seek a negotiated settlement. The Mozambican government was also not prepared to offer significant positions of patronage in government as a guarantee of RENAMO's survival. Only in the late 1980s, with declining external support for RENAMO and greater pressures on the government from the vacuum left by the end of the Cold War and the collapsing Eastern Bloc, were serious peace talks possible.

In this new climate, Community Sant' Egidio, a liberal Catholic movement, was well placed to play a constructive role in the peace process. It was able to persuade RENAMO to engage in dialogue as a result of the contacts its members had in Mozambique and its understanding of the dynamics of the conflict, and helped the rebels transform vague requests into communicable proposals. However, once the 11th round of peace talks got underway in June 1992, Community Sant' Egidio's role was reduced. Discussions on military issues brought the United States, France, Britain, and Portugal into the negotiations as observers, and the momentum grew for twin-track diplomacy and the urgent need to "Summitize" and "Africanize" the process.

### *The Rome General Peace Accord*

After 12, often torturous, rounds of negotiations, the General Peace Accord (GPA) was eventually signed in Rome on October 4, 1992 between President Joaquim Chissano and RENAMO leader, Afonso Dhlakama. The implementation of most of the key provisions of the GPA was placed in the hands of the United Nations (UN). According to UN Security Council Resolution 797, the newly established United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) was to perform a series of tasks such as monitoring and verifying the implementation of the ceasefire, including the retreat of Malawian and Zimbabwean units from Beira, Limpopo, and Nacala transport corridors, and protecting these corridors with its own forces.

In order to fulfill its mandate, ONUMOZ was provided with both civilian and military departments. It was mandated to monitor the cantonment, disarmament, and demobilization of nearly 110,000 combatants from both sides, as well as the creation of the new army and the resettlement of between five and six million refugees and displaced people. The cost was estimated at US \$331 million (one million dollars per day) until November 31, 1993.<sup>21</sup>

By 1996, 87 percent of demobilized soldiers had been integrated into society, and most had secured a food supply or small guaranteed income. The total reintegration budget was US \$94.4 million, of which US \$35.5 million was allocated to support two years of cash for registered ex-combatants and US \$33.7 million went directly to demobilized soldiers. In all, some 92,000 soldiers benefitted, about 71,000 from the government forces and 21,000 from RENAMO.

One of the surprises of the 2013 resumption of conflict between RENAMO and the government was the availability of arms for RENAMO. According to the Mozambican Force for Crime Investigation and Social Reinsertion (FOMICRES), between three and four million weapons were circulating at the end of the war in 1992.<sup>22</sup> During the 1992–1994 peace process, the priority of ONUMOZ was to help RENAMO transform itself into a political party and contest national elections. The UN priority was to dismantle RENAMO's command and control structures, and also disperse ex-combatants through the pay-and-scatter program. Disarmament was not a priority, and the UN's Special Representative, Aldo Ajello, admitted that he considered that muscular disarmament would undermine the peace process.<sup>23</sup>

The Rome GPA delivered over 20 years of peace. It was followed by an aid bonanza that rapidly transformed the FRELIMO elite into a patrimonial political class that became increasingly determined to hang on to power at all costs. Gas and coal reserves heightened the stakes further, dividing the FRELIMO elite over who had access to the spoils and triggering RENAMO's decision to return to targeted armed violence in 2013, to push for a new elite bargain with FRELIMO in order to also benefit from future coal and gas rents. Sumich and Honwana flagged the fragility of this GPA elite bargain in their assessment of FRELIMO and its disinclination to seriously share power. They concluded that:

[S]ince independence power has primarily been located in the Frelimo party, not in supposedly neutral state structures that could be inherited in a reasonably intact manner by another political force. Thus the very success of the party in rebuilding their hegemony and their disinclination to share power with social forces outside of their control could intensify the divisions and inequalities that helped to fuel the civil war in the first place.<sup>24</sup>

As mentioned above, until 2013, Mozambique was regarded as having passed through a successful post-conflict transition. In April 2013, there was a return to limited armed conflict between fighters of the former rebel group (RENAMO) and Mozambican government forces.<sup>25</sup> A new agreement in September 2014 ended regular armed skirmishing in central Mozambique, but armed violence once more resumed in 2015 and persisted until late December 2016, focused primarily on commercial links and public services. Fresh negotiations for a new political deal finally reached a new accord in August 2019.

RENAMO never expected to capture the Mozambican state, but has always sought a military or political stalemate through which it can extract *elite bargains* from the dominant party, FRELIMO, resulting in a temporary political settlement.<sup>26</sup>

## LEARNING FROM THE PAST FOR FUTURE PEACEBUILDING

One of the conclusions that can be drawn from RENAMO's strategy since 2013 is that maintaining armed men who are prepared to challenge the government enhanced RENAMO's political standing in the short term, and has resulted in a new process to reach a new elite bargain

in the longer term. In addition, two other lessons can be drawn from the resumed violence of 2013–2014 and subsequent clashes. First, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) efforts were seen as a finite, short-term technical process that did not cover political inclusion. This meant that after a decade of peace, international donors concluded that Mozambique had undergone a successful post-conflict transition and that support for the efforts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in this field was no longer a priority.

Second, disarmament should not have been neglected, and ONUMOZ missed an opportunity in this regard. After its withdrawal, the opportunity to disarm diminished and only a small percentage of weapons were given up through official and NGO efforts. RENAMO has maintained armed men and weapons stockpiles over 20 years, and there was early warning of this. In 2012, the NGO FOMICRES,<sup>27</sup> for instance, located large arms caches in five districts in Sofala province, including heavy weapons, but politically it was not able to access them for destruction.<sup>28</sup> While recognizing that RENAMO would never have handed over all its weapons to ONUMOZ, more effort during its mandate would have reduced stockpiles further, especially if international partners had continued to support disarmament and support alternative livelihoods of ex-combatants in central Mozambique.

RENAMO's continued access to an armed militia is also the result of a provision in the Rome GPA, which stipulated that the former rebels could maintain bodyguards (who would enjoy police status) as a “transitional guarantee” until elections in 1994. The objective then was for the police to take over these responsibilities, but that Dhlakama's “bodyguards” could, if a list be provided, receive police training. Although a list was eventually provided, the government insisted that once trained, these men must obey police orders. In January 1998, worried about losing authority over these men, Dhlakama categorically refused to allow his bodyguards to be incorporated into the police. It seems that a mixture of fear of losing his prime asset (armed men) and concern over his own security drove this decision.

The result was that from 1994 to 2013 the Mozambican government reluctantly accepted the de facto presence of several hundred armed RENAMO personnel resident in the Maringué and Cheringoma districts of Sofala province, who occasionally paraded with weapons and intimidated local FRELIMO activists.<sup>29</sup> A small group of them also escorted

Dhlakama and provided security for his house in Nampula as his “presidential guard.” They were poorly uniformed, with shoes falling off and brandishing old weapons.<sup>30</sup> The government wanted to disarm this “presidential guard” completely, and offered to integrate it with the national police force, but this offer was rejected. A further opening to reintegrate members of this RENAMO militia emerged from the September 2014 agreement that temporarily halted hostilities, but depended on their fitness and the provision of a new list. That list was never forthcoming but finally, in July 2019, a RENAMO list of 5,211 fighters, who were not integrated after the GPA, was provided.

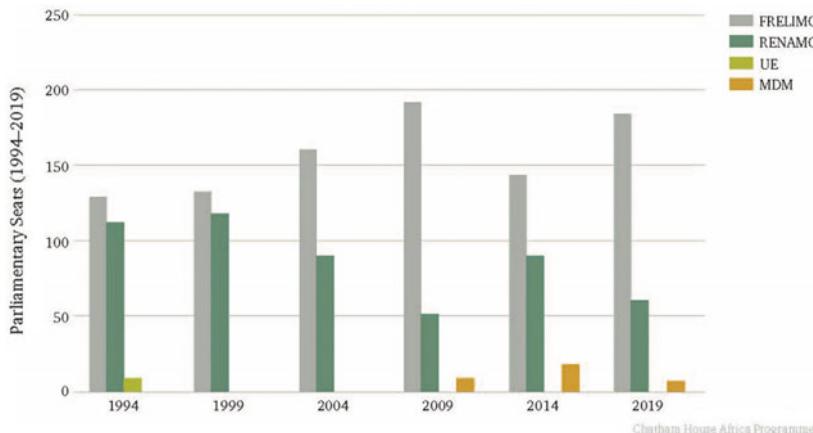
### *RENAMO’s Electoral Fortunes*

RENAMO has contested all six presidential and parliamentary elections since the war ended in 1992. The October 1994 elections enjoyed a high voter turnout of above 85 percent and there was little violence in the low-key campaign, although there was some intimidation by both sides in their stronghold areas. The results of all six elections up to 2014 show a generally clear and consistent pattern: FRELIMO has commanded a majority overall and dominated in the capital, the south, and the extreme north, while RENAMO remained strong among voters in the center and north. However, RENAMO was visibly weakened after the 2009 elections, and that parliament was dominated by FRELIMO, which won 75 percent of the votes and had majorities in all former RENAMO strongholds. Positions in the National Assembly were allocated to parties in proportion to their number of parliamentary seats (Fig. 18.1).

After 1994, and especially after the 1999 national election results, FRELIMO concluded that RENAMO posed an electoral risk.<sup>31</sup> In response, FRELIMO aggressively countered RENAMO, at times this involved intimidation and harassment of its supporters, especially during electoral cycles. As a result, there have been electoral irregularities in all the subsequent elections. In the October 2019 elections, there were widespread reports of irregularities. Experts suggest RENAMO may have lost five seats as a result but did not win outright, as they claimed.

### *The 2019 Peace Accords*

The Rome agreement lasted until 2013 when RENAMO returned to targeted armed conflict, ambushing cars, buses, and trains, and attacking

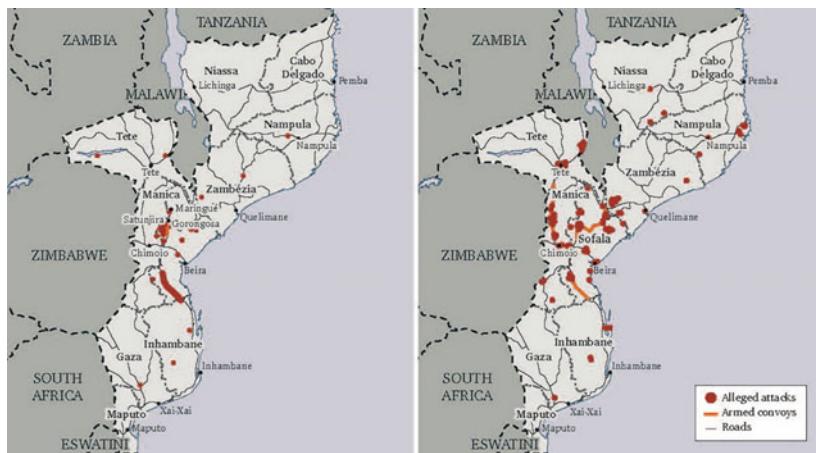


**Fig. 18.1** Parliamentary elections (*Source* Chatham House Africa Programme, adapted from República de Moçambique Comissão Nacional de Eleicoes [CNE] and Secretariado Técnico da Administração Eleitoral [STAE], <http://www.stae.org.mz/>)

government facilities. The violence was concentrated in the central Mozambican provinces of Manica and Sofala. Including government counter-measures, this resumed conflict in its two phases between 2013 and 2016 resulted in at least 150 killed and 500 injured (Map 18.3).<sup>32</sup>

So why did RENAMO return to armed conflict in 2013 after 20 years of peace and many years of peacebuilding efforts? And what can be done to avoid a resumption of hostilities going forward? FRELIMO's strategy toward RENAMO was the prime culprit. RENAMO gave FRELIMO an existential fright during the 1999 national elections, when RENAMO's former leader, the late Afonso Dhlakama, nearly won the presidency with 47.7 percent of the vote (some believe he actually did win—see Fig. 18.1). This convinced Armando Guebuza to seek total dominance when he became president in 2004, in an effort to guarantee FRELIMO control. This backfired, instead convincing Dhlakama that he needed to return to armed conflict to extract new concessions.

Reaching a new peace accord took six years, with three different peacebuilding efforts, first by faith leaders, then multiple international mediators, and finally an elite process driven initially by President Nyusi and Dhlakama (who died in 2018 and was succeeded by Ossufo Momade)



**Map 18.3** RENAMO armed clashes 2013–2014 (left) and 2015–2016 (right)  
*(Source Chatham House Africa Programme, adapted from @Verdade, AIM, ACLED, and author interviews)*

supported by the Swiss Ambassador to Mozambique, Mirko Manzoni, and mediators Neha Sanghrajka and Jonathan Powell.<sup>33</sup>

The peace agreements of August 1 and 6, 2019 built on these past peace processes. They were signed in Gorongosa and Maputo by President Filipe Nyusi and RENAMO leader, Momade. They were the third such agreement between the two parties, designed to bring an end to 42 years of violent competition between FRELIMO and RENAMO, somewhat weakened due to Dhlakama's death, which caused some fragmentation with RENAMO.

The August 6 Maputo Accord was witnessed by the chair of the African Union and four presidents, including South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa, as well as several past mediators. President Nyusi reminded the large crowd in Maputo that the road to peace has had past setbacks.<sup>34</sup>

This new elite bargain was also based on the assumption that there would be increased decentralization with the opportunity for RENAMO to win governorships in ten Mozambican provinces in exchange for meaningful DDR for RENAMO's armed militia. (The process for the 5,221 earmarked RENAMO fighters started in central Mozambique at the end

of July 2019.) Nobody, including FRELIMO strategists, imagined that RENAMO would fail to win majorities in one or two provinces.

This deal had been ripe for agreement, but the death of Dhlakama resulted in a power struggle within RENAMO and delayed the process. Gradually Momade asserted some authority, resulting in an attempt to pivot the party away from central Mozambique toward Zambezia and Nampula provinces. However, the October 2019 election results failed as RENAMO's electoral campaign was artisanal compared to an industrial FRELIMO effort.

There had already been splintering in RENAMO when, beginning in July 2018, a self-styled RENAMO military junta challenged Momade's authority and elected its own leader, Lieutenant General Mariano Ngongo. This group was small (up to 200 people) but enjoyed some support in central Mozambique. Armed attacks in central Mozambique during the second half of 2019 were a reminder that a few armed men can effect serious political and social disruption (Map 18.4).

RENAMO's armed supporters seek a lasting accommodation; FRELIMO's elite also want political stability to attract international investment. The benefits of the elite bargain for RENAMO were to have included elected governorships, payment for disarmament and employment, and development opportunities. However, RENAMO's poor elections results in October 2019 complicated this calculation.

### *Importance of Decentralization for Peacebuilding*

Meaningful decentralization by the government and full demobilization by RENAMO had been the key issues of negotiations in 2018 and 2019. In early 2018, President Nyusi and Dhlakama negotiated a framework accord on political decentralization. Following Dhlakama's death, there were fears this might not last. But in May 2018, parliament enacted a series of constitutional amendments to prepare for deepened decentralization. These provided for elected provincial, district, and municipal assemblies (with the leading delegate in the party with a simple majority, heading them). Following the work of the commission on decentralization, a constitutional amendment on the issue was passed in the National Assembly in May 2019. The following month, the president promulgated the Law of Punctual Review of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique.<sup>35</sup>



At the time of writing in January 2020, RENAMO's comprehensive disarmament remains the key government demand. Concessions for re-integrating RENAMO combatants into the armed forces (FADM) and police could be a sticking point. In this regard, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Military Affairs includes security provisions

for the placement of RENAMO ex-combatants into senior positions in the army and police force. New, symbolic senior posts are being created to absorb some of these former fighters and RENAMO has raised the idea of creating a “provincial police force.”

International partners will need to learn from past mistakes. They need to commit to long-term guarantees to DDR efforts in hotspots, particularly parts of central Mozambique and Tete province, and focus on bringing Momade—and the RENAMO military splinter group led by Lt Gen. Mariano Ngongo—into a process that incentivizes non-violent politics. A basket fund has been established to channel financing for DDR activities and a DDR camp has been constructed in central Mozambique by a group of military experts. Too much focus on austerity by international donors and the international financial institutions at this critical moment might backfire. Their engagement, instead, needs to be conflict-sensitive and not time-dependent. Like many other guerrilla groups, RENAMO will only gradually disarm its gunmen and is likely to keep hidden arms caches as an insurance policy. As a response, the best strategy is to build up political confidence and economic opportunity so that gradually this armed wing becomes redundant.

International partners will also need to review their past peacebuilding efforts to encourage local-level political pluralism. As Roberta Machietto observed:

[I]t is clear that economic and political liberalization...have not translated into a fair redistribution of the peace dividend. On the contrary, liberalization measures have been “adapted” in such a way as to consolidate the regime of the dominant party, only now with the legitimization of the international community.<sup>36</sup>

Machietto examined an ongoing national micro-credit program by the government called the District Development Fund (the “7 Million”) designed to support decentralization and aimed at reducing poverty and inequality in Mozambique. Her examination of the 7 Million was based upon field research in Nampula province and showed that, despite its limitations, some money and decision-making was devolved to local districts. This gave some communities experience of the possibilities of increased accountability by their local officials through the Local Councils and associated Local Development Committees. Unsurprisingly, FRELIMO party loyalty was an advantage for access to micro-credit from this

program.<sup>37</sup> However, as FRELIMO found in the 2018 local elections, this is no longer enough to win votes in Nampula province. FRELIMO will increasingly have to work harder to retain patronage.

Another major challenge to sustainable peacebuilding is the growth of corruption and the elite use of political influence to accumulate private wealth.<sup>38</sup> This trend accelerated over the post-civil war period with worrisome implications for the economy and stability. The post-2015 economic decline followed disclosures that the government had failed to report to the IMF US \$2.2 billion in state-guaranteed debt, which violated the terms of Mozambique's cooperation with the IMF.<sup>39</sup> Two foreign banks provided these loans, in an allegedly corrupt manner, to state-owned firms registered as private entities and controlled by state intelligence officials. These secret loans, most of them acquired in 2013, added around 30 percent to the country's foreign debt.<sup>40</sup> This scandal transformed the political and economic landscape and led to widespread anger at FRELIMO. The roots of this probably lie in the shock of the 1999 election results, when FRELIMO concluded that it needed regular funds for patronage and to ensure it won future elections. One response was to create a financial and business arm for the party, *SPI—Gestão e Investimentos SARL (SPI)*.<sup>41</sup>

The fall-out from the undisclosed loan scandal is ongoing and more revelations will emerge on what exactly happened in 2013. Elite corruption was clearly part of the logic. But President Guebuza was already wealthy. It is probable that, as he neared the end of his second and last term in his presidency, he considered how to secure a further term as party leader and also to ensure he remained the de facto power behind whoever succeeded him in the presidency.<sup>42</sup> Conflict with RENAMO in 2013 suited these ambitions but by 2014, as his influence declined inside FRELIMO, and RENAMO's armed actions damaged the Mozambican economy, he sought a new settlement with the former rebels. A potent reminder: peacebuilding in Mozambique is multi-layered, open-ended, progresses in fits-and-starts, and is prone to setbacks.

## CONCLUSION

The FRELIMO landslide victory following the sixth national multi-party elections in October 2019 has complicated the elite bargaining and peacebuilding efforts. Since Mozambique's first-ever multi-party elections in 1994, FRELIMO has pursued a strategy of co-option and division of

RENAMO through elite bargains. FRELIMO's post-conflict strategy was initially, under Chissano, to weaken RENAMO's support base in central Mozambique through compromise and patronage, and then, under Guebuza, obtain total FRELIMO domination across Mozambique. Guebuza's strategy spectacularly backfired, humiliating Dhlakama and radicalizing RENAMO's ex-combatants, resulting in their push for resumed targeted armed violence. This violence was rewarded in the 2014 elections, especially by voters in central Mozambique, strengthened Dhlakama's leadership position in RENAMO, and again postponed long-needed party reform.<sup>43</sup>

But, by 2015 Dhlakama also miscalculated, believing his threat of further violence would win more concessions. Instead, his threats increased splits in FRELIMO over its RENAMO strategy and weakened President Nyusi's attempts to reach a lasting accommodation. The result was at least one assassination attempt on Dhlakama and increased violence by both sides, despite a haphazard "good offices" effort by various international mediators. Common frustration of this process encouraged President Nyusi and Afonso Dhlakama to cut intermediaries and start bilateral talks. Helped with logistics and focus by a new Contact Group, led by Swiss Ambassador Manzoni, this process has made tentative progress. Encouragingly, conflict has not resumed and a new binding agreement was signed by both sides in August 2019.

Some 27 years after the Mozambican conflict ended, many RENAMO combatants have successfully reintegrated, but a hardened core of ex-militia remain, mainly in central Mozambique. Overall, Mozambique has remained an example of mostly successful demobilization, but poor peace-building success toward elite reintegration. Mozambican domestic politics is partly to blame for this, but so too is past international complacency. Mozambique's peace was not secure, as many blithely assumed.

The situation today in Mozambique also highlights the degree to which these bargaining processes are long-term and there is still a need to look at strategies to accommodate clusters of combatants that remain cohesive, particularly in central Mozambique. The August 2019 accord is backed up by development commitments for central Mozambique and promises of a better retirement for RENAMO's gunmen.

A durable peace settlement requires compromise by FRELIMO and an acceptance that RENAMO and other political parties can capitalize on some of the government's shortcomings. Going forward, the danger is that RENAMO's military wing will continue to fracture; there is also

uncertainty over Momade's commitment to historical loyalties from the 1977–1992 war, and how being weakened by his poor election results will impact events.

The poor electoral showing by RENAMO is a new test—having failed to win even a governorship. The elite bargain was for indirectly elected governorships for RENAMO, payment for disarmament, and employment and development opportunities. Without governorships, can this deal stick? Armed attacks in central Mozambique illustrate the fragility of the deal and the need to tackle the RENAMO splinter group present in the region. If the insecurity and violence there can be addressed, the domestic and international focus should move onto longer-term peacebuilding focus, such as poverty reduction, combating inequality, education, and solving the escalating security crisis with Islamic militants in Cabo Delgado province.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *International partners need to shift their approach to align with new political and conflict dynamics.* More long-term, targeted disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration in potential flash points in central Mozambique is required. On the economic side, donors need to be mindful that austerity measures, if pushed too hard, could backfire and re-militarize competition for scarce resources.
2. *Decentralization and local level political pluralism should be at the heart of future peacebuilding.* There remains an acute lack of trust between Mozambique's main political formations. Building political confidence and economic opportunities for all is the best way to finally make the armed wing of RENAMO redundant.

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## CHAPTER 19

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# The Dog That Did Not Bark: Why Has Sierra Leone Not Returned to War After Peacekeepers Left?

*Adekeye Adebajo*

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Sierra Leone's civil war lasted from 1991 to 2000, and resulted in an estimated 70,000 deaths and 2.6 million people displaced out of a total population of about 5.2 million at the time (about 7 million in 2020).<sup>2</sup> The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) had invaded Sierra Leone from Liberia in March 1991 with the assistance of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The invasion resulted in several hundred Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Guinean troops from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia being deployed to assist Sierra Leone, a fellow ECOMOG member, to defend its capital of Freetown. ECOMOG's role in Sierra Leone increased tremendously after a military

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coup by the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) in May 1997, which the subregional force crushed by February 1998, restoring the elected president, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, to power.<sup>3</sup>

The United Nations (UN) Security Council established the UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) in July 1998,<sup>4</sup> with only about 50 observers alongside ECOMOG's 13,000 troops (12,000 being from Nigeria). A UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was established in October 1999 to take over from ECOMOG, with about 3,300 Nigerian peacekeepers "rehatted" as UN troops. The RUF prevented the deployment of the 17,400-strong UNAMSIL to the diamond-rich eastern provinces, and, from May 2000, attacked UN peacekeepers, killing some of them, holding about 500 of them hostage, and seizing their heavy weapons and vehicles.<sup>5</sup> A brief British military intervention with about 800 troops helped to stabilize the situation in Freetown and its environs between May and June 2000.

The UN's disarmament program for 75,000 Sierra Leonean combatants was completed in January 2002, with 42,000 weapons collected. UN-monitored elections in May 2002 saw president Ahmed Tejan Kabbah re-elected in a landslide victory. The RUF Party (RUFP) failed to win a single seat.

The decade-long war in Sierra Leone was finally over. After six years of sometimes tortuous peacekeeping, the world body finally withdrew its remaining troops from Sierra Leone in December 2005. Though the country remained largely peaceful, many peacebuilding challenges remained unresolved. UNAMSIL had spent an estimated US \$5 billion in Sierra Leone over six years,<sup>6</sup> but over 80 percent of these funds had gone toward its peacekeeping mission rather than for tasks such as reintegrating ex-combatants into society, reversing massive youth unemployment, restructuring a new national army, and helping to restore state institutions.

The UN Security Council established an Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) in January 2006 to coordinate international peace consolidation efforts and to support the government in Freetown. However, similar to past experiences in Liberia, Angola, and the Central African Republic (CAR), this office lacked sufficient resources and staff to assist the Sierra Leonean government effectively in its post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction tasks. The government in Freetown collected revenues from its diamond industry of only US \$145 million in 2005.<sup>7</sup> Violent student and labor protests also increased, amidst widespread

youth unemployment and weak government capacity. Instability in Côte d'Ivoire, the fragile situation in Liberia, and reports of encroachment into Sierra Leonean territory by Guinean government troops occupying disputed border areas, further threatened the country's newfound peace.<sup>8</sup>

A critical factor in Sierra Leone's stability is the complex interaction of domestic, subregional, and external actors, which is crucial to the success of conflict management and conflict prevention processes. This chapter focuses squarely on the inter-play of actors at these three interdependent levels, as these diverse players often assist or obstruct peacebuilding efforts. It sets out to solve the Sherlock Holmes-type mystery of why Sierra Leone has remained stable 15 years after peacekeepers left the country, and 20 years after the end of a devastating 11-year civil war in which an estimated 70,000 people died.

There are estimates that suggest that in half of all conflicts, countries revert to war within five years as a result of inadequate peacebuilding.<sup>9</sup> Considering that many of the same conditions existed in post-war Sierra Leone as existed before the war—massive youth unemployment; poor governance and corruption; regional and ethnic divisions; and 70 percent of the population living in poverty—what factors explain the reasons why Sierra Leone did not slide back into conflict? Just as in British novelist Arthur Conan Doyle's 1892 Sherlock Holmes short story, "The Adventure of Silver Blaze," this chapter asks why the dog did not bark at night.

## SIERRA LEONE'S PEACEBUILDING CHALLENGES

An estimated 42 percent of Sierra Leone's population was under the age of 15 in 2008.<sup>10</sup> Starting with the country's major peacebuilding challenges (based on factors that usually contribute to conflicts, building on my own research on 15 conflict cases across Africa between 1956 and 2011),<sup>11</sup> Sierra Leone's massive youth unemployment—estimated at 600,000 people by March 2010<sup>12</sup>—was often cited as the most urgent task facing the country by both the administrations of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah (1996–2007) and Ernest Bai Koroma (2007–2018), as well as the international donor community.

Furthermore, Sierra Leone's youths were prominently involved in illegal diamond mining. Instability often erupted in mining areas involving local youths, and communities frequently claimed that they had not been consulted or compensated for the use of their land by foreign

companies. Crimes such as armed robbery, rape, and murder continued unabated, while land disputes proliferated in local communities. It must, however, be noted that these crimes were often no worse than those in neighboring countries such as Liberia and Guinea.<sup>13</sup>

The reform of Sierra Leone's security sector—the army and the police—was also another major challenge which was again linked to the issue of youth, as a large proportion of young people were employed in this sector, even as the vast majority of demobilized youths could not find gainful employment. Both the Sierra Leone Police and Sierra Leone Armed Forces were weak institutions which had been discredited during the country's civil war: some of their members had been involved in staging the 1997 military coup, while others had joined the rebels, thus creating the “sobel” phenomenon of soldiers by day and rebels by night.

Sierra Leone's 10,500-strong armed forces faced continuing issues of low pay and low morale, exacerbated by the demobilization of staff, including 70 senior officers, by April 2006.<sup>14</sup> The army also lacked adequate housing and the conditions in its barracks were atrocious. Further exacerbating an already difficult situation, the defense ministry and armed forces were only able to access 20 percent of their approved funds in 2007 due to cumbersome administrative processes.<sup>15</sup> Related to reform of the security sector, was a weak justice system that lacked trained magistrates in sufficient numbers, resulting in a large backlog of cases. The country's prisons were also often in an abysmal state that compromised the rights of suspects and prisoners.

In terms of Sierra Leone's 8,900-strong police force, it suffered from a lack of equipment; corruption was widespread among its ranks; low salaries were irregularly paid; and 40 percent of its personnel had been in the force for only three years. Though many members of the senior management of the police were professional and well-trained, the middle management of the force particularly suffered from poor skills and low motivation, and one-third of its members had been employed for only three years.<sup>16</sup> Sierra Leone's police further struggled with insufficient vehicles, communications equipment, proper accommodation, handcuffs, batons, and torches. Its financial allocation in 2007, for example, was only US \$6.6 million.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, deep-seated poverty presented a major challenge in efforts to reconstruct the Sierra Leonean “Humpty Dumpty.” More than 60 percent of the population lived in extreme poverty,<sup>18</sup> while 70 percent

lived on less than US \$1 a day.<sup>19</sup> The price of the basic staple food—rice—was also beyond the reach of most citizens. This was particularly dangerous, as “rice riots” in neighboring Liberia in April 1979 had triggered a political crisis that would eventually culminate in a decade of military rule and 13 years of civil conflict. An estimated 80–90 percent of Sierra Leone’s working population were in the informal sector,<sup>20</sup> barely surviving and struggling to eke out a living. To further compound these problems, the government had to deal respectively with cholera and Ebola outbreaks in 2012 (at least 216 fatalities) and 2014 (about 3,600 fatalities). Devastating mudslides on the outskirts of Freetown in August 2017 also killed over 1,000 people.

Infrastructure was another major challenge with erratic water and power supply. The country’s road and electricity networks were dilapidated, further hampering efforts at economic recovery. This situation was exacerbated by the weakness of poorly financed District Councils (the country has 13 districts) unable to deliver social services to the populace. Despite much talk of “decentralization,” most decision-making and resources still remained with the central government in Freetown, which was itself grossly under-resourced.

Poor governance, involving corrupt and unaccountable leadership—a blight on Sierra Leone since independence in April 1961—continued to be a problem across all parties. To address these multiple challenges, the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone—the first-ever such office established by the world body after the departure of its own peace-keepers—established five priority sectors as part of its mandate to rebuild Sierra Leone: peace and governance; human rights and rule of law; civilian police; military; and public information. Though these were clearly important areas, UNIOSIL lacked the human and financial resources to address these huge challenges: in 2006, it had only 20 police personnel and 10 military officers, while its total civilian staff was 309 (reduced to 247 by April 2008). The mission, however, worked with other UN agencies such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP); the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF); the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and the World Food Programme (WFP). Nevertheless, the UN had a mostly token presence in the country, and many of UNIOSIL’s staff were limited to working in the capital of Freetown. Even after UNIOSIL was transformed into the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) by October 2008, this change of acronym

scarcely made a difference to its even more limited capacity of 73 local and international staff.

In addition to these challenges, Sierra Leone also continued to face subregional challenges. It is significant to focus attention on this central problem since the country's civil war had been triggered from Liberia and assisted by the fighters of Liberian warlord, Charles Taylor. An estimated 500,000 Sierra Leonean refugees had spilled into Liberia and Guinea in the course of its civil war. Such refugee camps have traditionally been used as breeding and recruiting grounds for militias. Guinean soldiers also still occupied the border village of Yenga on the Sierra Leonean side, with reports of harassment of local villagers. Furthermore, Guinean troops were encroaching on the Kambia area in Sierra Leone, ordering a bauxite mining company to stop prospecting in 2006.<sup>21</sup>

## ADDRESSING THE PEACEBUILDING CHALLENGES

Having outlined Sierra Leone's key peacebuilding challenges, the efforts of key domestic, subregional, and external actors to address these obstacles and to prevent the country's relapse into conflict are assessed below.

### *Domestic Actors*

One crucial but often overlooked source of Sierra Leone's stability is its active civil society sector, which remained vibrant even during the worst periods of the country's civil war. These civic groups were instrumental in pressuring the military to leave power in February 1996. Sierra Leonean lawyer and a leading light in her country's civil society movement in the 1990s, Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, traced the history of the country's civic groups to the opposition of one-party rule under Siaka Stevens between 1968 and 1985, when university students and independent media like *the Tablet* and *For Di People* led the charge against autocratic rule. She went on to note that, during the civil war of 1991–2002, women's groups (such as the Women's Movement of Sierra Leone); religious organizations (such as the Multi-Religious Council [MRC]); student activists (such as the National Union of Sierra Leone Students [NUSS]); media organizations (such as the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists [SLAJ]); trade unions (such as the Sierra Leone Labour Congress); traditional leaders (who mobilized local communities to form self-defense militias known as

*Kamajors, Gbethis, Tamaboros, and Donsos); and other civic groups, all sought to hold successive governments accountable.*

In implementing the 1999 Lomé Peace Accord, the chiefs in southern Sierra Leone played a particularly instrumental role in reconciliation efforts and in reintegrating ex-combatants into local communities. During the country's May 2002 elections, the Sierra Leone Labour Congress and the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists played leading roles in voter education and election monitoring.<sup>22</sup> After peacekeepers left Sierra Leone in 2005, these civic groups sought to promote transparent governance, human rights, press freedom, access to justice, gender equality, strengthening public institutions, and securing reparations for victims of the civil conflict, as recommended by the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Other groups that form part of the country's associational life have included long-standing church groups, Islamic fraternities, reciprocal labor companies, initiation societies, rotary and other social clubs, sports clubs, and credit clubs (such as *osusu*, involving rotating credit). These diverse actors have demonstrated great resilience and resourcefulness in the face of the country's hardships, and provided the glue that held Sierra Leone's post-war society together.<sup>23</sup>

The country also has a plurality of voices with 28 political parties, 49 daily newspapers, and 39 radio stations by August 2006,<sup>24</sup> though regulation of the media remained weak and ethical journalistic standards were not always observed. Sierra Leone, further, significantly produced some of the finest scholars in the Diaspora—Yusuf Bangura, Jimmy Kandeh, Ismail Rashid, Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, Aminatta Forna, and Tunde Zack-Williams, to name a few.

One sector that successive governments in Freetown seem to have prioritized was the critical area of education, with 20 percent of expenditure going to this important area by August 2006, and primary school enrolment doubling between 2000 and 2005.<sup>25</sup> The government also launched youth employment and empowerment schemes which, however, suffered from a lack of funding and failed to make much of a dent in the country's large youth unemployment statistics. But as Sierra Leonean scholar, Ismail Rashid, insightfully noted, while there has been widespread youth unemployment in post-war Sierra Leone, there has not been large-scale youth destitution. The country's youths have been resourceful at engaging in such activities as petty trading, street-hawking, driving *okada* (motorbike) taxis, and engaging in other transport services.<sup>26</sup>

Despite its multiple challenges, successive governments in Freetown also deserve credit for leading efforts at organizing three presidential and parliamentary elections in 2007, 2012, and 2018 with two to four million voters participating in each poll. The UN provided some technical assistance to these efforts. An impressive 91 percent of eligible voters—2.6 million people—registered for the August 2007 polls,<sup>27</sup> suggesting that the vast majority of Sierra Leoneans felt that they had a stake in building a viable democracy. The fact that many former RUF combatants voted for the All People’s Congress (APC) in 2007<sup>28</sup> also suggested that the ballot—rather than the bullet—was now seen, even by former fighters, as a viable way of changing a civilian regime.

Equally impressive was the fact that the opposition APC was able to defeat the incumbent Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) government which had been in power since March 1996. Despite violent clashes between supporters of both parties, as well as intimidation and harassment—particularly in the SLPP’s traditional southern and eastern strongholds—the polls were successfully held, and power was peacefully transferred from Ahmed Tejan Kabbah to Ernest Bai Koroma in 2007. The 2012 polls also saw a high 87 percent of voters turning out, showing that confidence in the ballot box remained high. The fact that no ethnic group in Sierra Leone is numerically dominant means that politicians are forced, to some extent, to build coalitions that simply go beyond narrow ethnic blocs.<sup>29</sup>

Like the fabled Old Mother Hubbard, on assuming office in 2007, Ernest Koroma went to the national cupboard to find it bare. He effectively inherited an empty treasury, asking donors to fund 80 percent of the national budget on assuming office.<sup>30</sup> The president was often quick to manage incidents of electoral conflicts, setting up commissions of inquiry to investigate serious acts of violence. Inter-party dialogues involving senior officials and youth and women’s wings of the two main parties also helped to ease tensions. Koroma appeared to be more dynamic an administrator than the mild-mannered and sometimes lackadaisical Kabbah. He established a fast-track anti-corruption court, and took action—not always consistently—even against some members of his own party.

The president did manage some other achievements, particularly in the area of infrastructure, confirmed by his overwhelming re-election in November 2012. Koroma’s Bumbuna Hydroelectric Project boosted the country’s electricity supply. He increased government revenues through introducing a goods and services tax in 2010. He established an Office of

Diaspora Affairs in the presidency to tap into increased remittances from the large Sierra Leonean Diaspora. He initiated free health care for pregnant women, new mothers, children and infants and advocated increased food self-sufficiency as his government's highest priority, providing more support to the country's farmers through seeds and fertilizers.

But despite these efforts, the estimated value of Sierra Leone's exports was still a measly US \$180 million in 2009.<sup>31</sup> Koroma was accused after the 2007 election of fanning ethnic divisions by replacing large numbers of senior officials in the civil service and parastatals from the SLPP with APC-supporting northerners.<sup>32</sup> The president's *Agenda for Prosperity*, which sought to transform the country's agricultural sector, was derailed by the Ebola crisis of 2014/2015, with Sierra Leone classified as the third hungriest country in the Global Hunger Index by 2017. As Koroma's term was coming to an end by March 2018, his administration was accused of embezzling funds meant for Ebola relief and siphoning funds from a scholarship program meant for poor Sierra Leoneans making the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>33</sup>

### *Regional Actors*

Turning from the domestic to the subregional level, the three heads of state of the Mano River Union—Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia—met regularly to discuss security issues in the volatile Mano River basin. Freetown also played an active role in subregional diplomacy through ECOWAS summits. With the arrival in power in Conakry of the democratically elected Alpha Condé, in December 2010, relations with Guinea improved dramatically. By April 2013, Guinean troops had completed their withdrawal from Yenga, an area that had been occupied since 1999.<sup>34</sup> The stability of Sierra Leone's neighborhood after the end of conflict in Liberia in 2003 and the end of military rule in Guinea by 2010 were thus important factors in reducing incentives for Sierra Leonean youths to join rebel militias in neighboring countries.

### *External Actors*

A plethora of international actors were involved in assisting Sierra Leone's peacebuilding efforts. Led by the UN and its agencies, these actors also included the African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Fund for

Agricultural Development (IFAD), the European Union (EU), and the governments of Britain, the United States (U.S.), Ireland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Japan, Germany, and Canada. Though the support provided by these international donors was useful in keeping the fragile peace, the amounts provided were often derisory, and clearly insufficient for transforming Sierra Leone's institutions to ensure sustainable peace.

In 2006, for example, only US \$351.5 million—less than half of the estimated US \$850 million that the UN peacekeeping force in the country spent annually—was provided to Sierra Leone by international donors.<sup>35</sup> The UN Peacebuilding Commission's paltry contribution of US \$35 million—which it took over three years to disburse—was particularly embarrassing for a body set up at the same time as the UN peacebuilding office in Sierra Leone. A Victim's Trust Fund established by the government in Freetown in September 2009 had attracted only US \$25,000 a year later.<sup>36</sup> Even the UN's own Joint Vision 2009–2010 of US \$360 million had a shortfall of US \$151 million by the end of its funding period.<sup>37</sup> The EU and the World Bank grandiosely announced a three-year “decentralized service delivery program” in 2012 worth a derisory US \$32 million. The rhetoric of external donors was always more impressive than their actual provision of resources.

Foreign assistance correctly prioritized Sierra Leone's security sector since the failure of the country's army to maintain a monopoly of legitimate armed force over its territory had facilitated the country's civil conflict in the first place. The British-led Security Sector Reform Programme (SILSEP) and its International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT)—which provided much security reassurance to the Sierra Leonean population<sup>38</sup>—drove efforts to restructure and retrain the Sierra Leone army, but had only 65 staff in 2001. A year later, 2,091 fighters from diverse factions outside the army had been integrated into a 12,000-strong army. Despite this external assistance, defense spending in 2006/2007 was only US \$13.3 million, meaning that half of the programmed defense expenditure could not occur.<sup>39</sup> These programs nevertheless eventually led to the reduction of the army's strength from 10,600 in 2006 to 8,500 by 2012.<sup>40</sup> There were, however, reports of a lack of consultation by the British government with Freetown in drawing up army restructuring benchmarks (within a 10-year GB £40 million annual bilateral development assistance program for Sierra Leone between 2002 and 2012).<sup>41</sup>

Ismail Rashid provided a balanced assessment of British efforts at restructuring the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), praising the renewed professionalism, discipline, and credibility of the army, but noting that London's overbearing leadership of the program had denied the government in Freetown ownership of it. Vehicles, communication equipment, arms (worth about US \$1.4 million),<sup>42</sup> and uniforms were provided by London. New recruitment criteria, structures, and missions were also developed by British military personnel, who took over the training of the army from the former Nigerian Chief of Defense Staff (CDS) of the Sierra Leone army, General Maxwell Khobe, who died in April 2000, as the British were stepping up their presence. The Nigerian-led ECOMOG peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone had recommended that the country create a 5,000-strong army, while upgrading its navy and air force.<sup>43</sup> London simply brushed aside these subregional plans in place of its own models. As Nigerian defense minister at the time, General Theophilus Danjuma, noted in March 2001: "The British have a very good propaganda machinery. They make a lot of noise and have succeeded in replacing us in the armed forces headquarters in Freetown, but they are doing very little elsewhere."<sup>44</sup>

Eboe Hutchful's insightful critique of security sector reform in Sierra Leone is also worth bearing in mind. He has consistently advocated the concept of "security sector governance" in which institutions of accountability and oversight would be strengthened from the bottom up rather than from the top down. Hutchful was critical of the lack of oversight institutions in post-conflict Sierra Leone, particularly the executive and legislative sectors, and noted an initial reluctance on the part of civil society to engage the security sector due to the hostility toward soldiers engendered by the country's decade-long civil war. The Ghanaian scholar observed that in environments like Sierra Leone, security sector reform has often reflected Westphalian assumptions of the state as the sole provider of security, and thus failed to incorporate community-based justice and security systems, as well as traditional institutions such as village chiefs and secret societies, into their reforms. Hutchful further noted that President Kabbah's government did not take security sector reform seriously, and criticized London's tendency to draw on intricate British models in designing the defense ministry and the national security office, which often undermined local ownership. He also bemoaned the modest attention given to the vital justice sector.<sup>45</sup>

Britain further contributed to efforts to reform the 8,900-strong Sierra Leone Police (SLP) through the Justice Sector Development Programme (JSDP). A retired British assistant chief constable, Keith Biddle, was put in charge of the police force as Inspector-General between 1999 and 2003. Biddle enjoyed a particularly close relationship with President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah.<sup>46</sup> London provided GB £25 million for restructuring Sierra Leone's police, with senior officers trained at Britain's Police Staff College in Bramshill. The force was provided with 700 vehicles, communication equipment, and uniforms. This program was later transformed into the British-dominated Commonwealth Community Safety Project between 2000 and 2005. "Local needs policing" was introduced, the force was strengthened to be able to combat domestic protests, and a Complaint, Discipline, and Investigations Department was created. By November 2006, Sierra Leone's police force had achieved its full strength of 9,500<sup>47</sup> (up from 6,600 in 1999). But corruption still remained rife within the force, leading to questions of credibility among the general population.

One of the most widely praised projects of these police reforms was the Family Support Units (FSUs), pioneered by the most senior female police officer in the SLP, Kadi Fakondo. This innovative project saw specialized police stations established to deal with domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abandonment; as well as police officers conducting sensitization workshops with local communities, resulting in greater monitoring of gender and child-related crimes. But underlining the difficulty of sustaining these projects, funding for police reforms had practically been exhausted by 2009.<sup>48</sup>

Despite these contributions to rebuilding Sierra Leone's police sector, fundamental questions must be raised, in light of the Macpherson report of 1999–2000, which shook the British establishment to its core. The report declared—something many ethnic minorities had known for decades—that the police force in London, the country's largest, suffered from "institutionalized racism." In the decade after Macpherson, African and Asian minorities suffered 1.5 million more stop-and-searches than white Britons, resulting in London's Metropolitan Black Police Association (BPA) declaring in April 2013 that the Met was still institutionally racist.<sup>49</sup> Given these statistics, one is forced to ask whether Britain was really in a credible position to "export" what it did not have—an impartial police force—abroad.

Youth was another vital sector that enjoyed priority from external actors, with about 800,000 young people in Sierra Leone being unemployed, underemployed, or employed without being paid.<sup>50</sup> The Koroma government established a National Youth Commission for implementing youth development programs, and a new ministry of Youth Employment and Sports by 2011. The World Bank launched a US \$20 million three-year project to increase business and employment opportunities for youth through apprenticeships, business development, and other skills. These efforts were also supported by the UNDP and other donors, focusing on supporting government youth employment schemes; microfinancing skills; and work-for-cash and food-for-work projects. As impressive as these programs often sounded, many—including several World Bank projects—were attracting funding of paltry sums in 2011: a US \$10 million cash-for-work scheme and a US \$6 million employment proposal scheme. A particularly neglected area was programs for vulnerable young women in post-war Sierra Leone, with rape now a major scourge of post-war society.

In March 2014, UNIPSIL left Sierra Leone, effectively ending a 16-year UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding presence in the country.

## CONCLUSION

Sierra Leone held its fifth post-war election in March 2018, involving 16 political parties. Despite sporadic violence in parts of the country and a dispute over the electoral results, the polls were largely peaceful. The SLPP's former head of the ruling military junta for three months in 1996, Julius Maada Bio, won 51.8 percent of the vote in the second round to the APC's Samura Kamara's 48.2 percent.<sup>51</sup> An impressive 2.6 million Sierra Leoneans (84 percent of registered voters) took part in the polls, demonstrating the continuing confidence of the vast majority of the population in the ballot, and resulting in an impressive third transfer of power in a decade between the country's two main parties. However, with such a narrow margin of victory—and with no parliamentary majority—amidst an acrimonious, ethnic-fueled election campaign, many challenges lay ahead for the new administration.

President Maada Bio's first two years in office (2018–2020) saw a continued focus on trying to revive the economy. A commission of inquiry reportedly uncovered evidence of gross corruption by the previous administration of Ernest Koroma. However, an Independent

Commission for Peace and National Cohesion was also established, and a reconciliation meeting was held between Bio and Koroma in State House in September 2019. A high court ruling in May 2019 canceled the disputed election of 10 APC parliamentarians in polls held a year earlier, and all the seats subsequently ended up with Bio's SLPP, handing the ruling party a one-seat majority in parliament (58 to 57 seats).<sup>52</sup>

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Four key policy lessons can be drawn from this case at the domestic, subregional, and external levels for future peacebuilding efforts in Africa and elsewhere. As ever, the specific idiosyncrasies of Sierra Leone must always be kept in mind.

- 1. Ensure that local actors are the authors of rebuilding their own state, even as they rely heavily on external resources.* Domestic civil society organizations and dynamic leadership have a crucial role to play in post-war stability. A strong civil society with a long tradition of holding governments accountable appears to have been important to successful post-conflict peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone. Dynamic leadership also appears to have made a difference under Ernest Koroma's leadership, particularly between 2007 and 2012. While the UN, the World Bank, and international donors continue to tout their "state-building" ambitions, they clearly lacked the resources and local knowledge to rebuild the Sierra Leonean state. But donor funds have not been provided to Sierra Leone in the quantities required (Marshall aid to rebuild Europe after 1945 was US \$100 billion), and the Sierra Leonean state—like an old car—has gone through an arduous process of "panel beating" rather than rebuilding. It remains fragile and in constant danger of breakdown, requiring frequent care, resourceful innovation, and close attention just to keep the battered jalopy on the road.
- 2. Prioritize subregional engagement and leadership.* In terms of the role of subregional actors, one of the most striking observations is the central role that Nigerian-led subregional peacekeepers had played in Sierra Leone during its decade-long civil war in the 1990s in stark contrast to their almost invisible role in post-conflict peacebuilding. Representatives of Nigeria and Ghana took part in efforts to reconcile political actors, while ECOWAS pledged US \$2

million to infrastructure projects in Sierra Leone in April 2010.<sup>53</sup> However, neither ECOWAS nor the African Union (AU) had the substantial resources to contribute to peacebuilding efforts, and even regional hegemon Nigeria—accounting for about 70 percent of West Africa’s economy—which had invested so much blood and treasure in the country, sacrificing the lives of at least 500 peacekeepers and spending billions of dollars between 1991 and 2000, did not play a prominent role in peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone. Questions must surely be asked why Britain—with very limited peacekeeping experience—should have been training the Sierra Leone army, when Nigeria and Ghana had five decades of international peacekeeping experience, had collaborated with the Sierra Leone army under ECOMOG in Liberia for nearly a decade, and were closer to the country’s military in terms of culture and equipment needs.

3. *Enhance scrutiny and accountability of external peacebuilding actors.* The role of external peacebuilding actors also requires critical scrutiny to which they have rarely been exposed. UN agencies, the World Bank, and other international donors have frequently painted a rosy, but exaggerated picture of the great impact that their projects have had in transforming postwar Sierra Leone, in order to continue attracting donor funding. The world body’s greatest asset is undoubtedly the legitimacy that it lends to international efforts and its mobilizing abilities, ensuring that the powerful 15-member UN Security Council continues to focus attention on countries like Sierra Leone. International donors in Sierra Leone, however, often lacked proper coordination, and some planted their flags on different bilateral projects touting apparently impactful contributions that were just a drop in a much larger ocean of need. There was also sometimes a patronizing and paternalistic feeling that outsiders knew best, and many donors thus, at times, ignored Sierra Leonean government or civil society priorities, leading to charges of “donor democracy.”

Britain clearly sought to act as a lead nation in promoting security sector reform in a former West African colony—maintaining a similar hyperactivity as France has done in former colonies such as Mali, Côte d’Ivoire, and Chad—to justify a veto-wielding permanent seat on a UN Security Council that has long become anachronistic. As

with the Gallic role in its former colonies, there was also a commercial side to London's role in Sierra Leone: British company, London Mining, and African Minerals Limited won a major contract in 2010 to develop iron ore deposits in Sierra Leone, while British firms disproportionately benefitted from security sector reform contracts. This was, therefore, not merely a case of charitable benevolence by a neo-colonial Santa Claus.

4. *Support Sierra Leoneans' efforts to move from stabilization to transformation of their still fragile state.* Despite the messy complexities of Sierra Leone's post-conflict peacebuilding process, the mystery of why the dog did not bark, and why Sierra Leone has not relapsed into conflict in two decades since 2002 after a devastating 11-year conflict, lies in the actions of these domestic, subregional, and external actors who somehow "muddled through" and improvised one of the few relative peacebuilding success stories of the last two decades. For this case to remain a sustainable success, however, serious resources will need to be provided by regional and external donors to enable domestic actors in Sierra Leone to truly transform their society.

**Acknowledgements** The author wishes to thank Yusuf Bangura, John Hirsch, David Keen, Ismail Rashid, and the editor, Terence McNamee, for very useful comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

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## CHAPTER 20

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# Lessons in Failure: Peacebuilding in Sudan/South Sudan

*Jok Madut Jok*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important factors in the collapse of peace agreements and the failure to build peace in post-conflict countries in Africa is the nature of the conflict itself—how the wars are fought, what consequences live on long after they have been “settled,” and how affected communities remember the wars.

Some of the common characteristics of violent political conflicts in Africa include the multiplicity of warring parties, competing actors, and layers within a single conflict. Often, African conflicts are more multi-faceted than they might appear to distant observers. Even more often, these conflicts create a situation of “wars within wars.” This makes attempts at peacebuilding a treacherous endeavor.<sup>1</sup> Frequent relapses to conflict are an ever-present danger.

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The causes of these relapses are broadly known but hardly ever given the primacy they deserve in the crafting of peace agreements. This is particularly true of Sudan and South Sudan over decades. The main conflict drivers—from disagreement over power and resource sharing along ethnic lines, lack of justice for atrocities committed during conflict, and the failure of peace agreements to live up to the promises they make to citizens and interest groups—are well known. Here, as elsewhere, the multiplicity of competing actors presents the mediator with a tough set of questions: which parties to reconcile and which to (effectively) ignore? How inclusive should the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements be, mindful that too broad an agreement might reduce key parties' attachment to it? How do you avoid creating future spoilers in the process?

The central argument in this chapter is that too many African conflict resolution deals and peacebuilding efforts tend to rely on political agreements between politico-military elites—“the gun class,” so to speak.<sup>2</sup> These deals often focus on elite power and resource-sharing arrangements, while ignoring the communal and societal dynamics that fed the war and leave embers in its wake. To name only a few of those embers:

- i. Lack of justice and accountability for crimes committed during war;
- ii. lack of reconciliation between and within conflict-ravaged communities; and
- iii. lack of programs to alleviate societal trauma.

Common to most protracted conflicts which relapse into war is a disconnect between elites and local communities, which typically suffer the most when the former undermine peace agreements to further their own narrow interests.<sup>3</sup> Also typical is the exclusion of Africa’s youth—the largest population group in Sub-Saharan Africa—from peace negotiations and subsequent reconstruction programs. This is unhelpful in the pursuit of long-term, sustainable peace. The inordinate focus on elites in reconciliation and peace negotiations also has the effect of weakening much-needed security reforms, which inevitably are the most difficult to tackle in peace negotiations. A peace deal, in Africa as elsewhere, is only as viable as its security arrangements.<sup>4</sup>

In essence, these elite pacts, important as they are in the reduction of violence, lead to a variety of other contests, including competition to seize

the renewed flow of money and resources which usually follows peace agreements. As for ordinary citizens, their experience typically is one of disappointment or the status quo. The absence of meaningful change to their lives often becomes a catalyst for a swift return to conflict.<sup>5</sup>

In order to unpack these dynamics, this chapter looks at the histories and experiences of peacebuilding in Sudan and South Sudan. It seeks to demonstrate why these two countries failed to achieve peace, despite signing, in 2005, one of Africa's most celebrated negotiated political settlements, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended decades of civil war between the north and south. Indeed, the CPA is perhaps partly responsible for a large swath of South Sudan's population being subject to massive humanitarian crises and violence by both state and non-state actors. The chapter also describes the patterns observed in the course of the 15 years the CPA has been (barely) implemented in the “two Sudans” that emerged in 2011.

The main focus here is not the troubled history between the north and south, but rather their respective internal dynamics and why peacebuilding in each has largely failed.<sup>6</sup>

## THE PROBLEM

While no two conflict situations are identical, the factors that scupper peace agreements and peacebuilding in many parts of Africa are generally the same.<sup>7</sup> The role of marginalized youth, easily persuaded to take up arms in the absence of meaningful livelihood options, is almost always cited.<sup>8</sup> The massive burden that prolonged war leaves on the conscience and shoulders of societies, especially the destruction of social and communal values—the backbone that supports justice, coexistence, tolerance, and conflict resolution in those societies—is another. To put this succinctly, while most post-war reconstruction focuses on rebuilding the infrastructure, the economy, and public institutions, it has often lost sight of the need for reconstruction of the people themselves, i.e., their relationships with one another, assisting them to come to terms with trauma and rebuilding family networks, and restoring the social order that undergirded stability before the war broke out. Where a sense of justice, in particular, fails, the trust of ordinary people in peace agreements is sure to collapse. The recurrent failure to secure populations’ “buy-in”—a stake—in peace processes is almost always fatal to them.<sup>9</sup> So, too, the behavior of rebel leaders who become the rulers in a post-war situation and believe,

as putative liberators, they are *entitled* to the state—its national army, the best jobs, contracts, and so on.

When peace does return sustainably to territories that have known war for prolonged periods, typically it means that the state has gained the trust of ordinary people that their lives will improve and that the predatory practices of wartime have ended.<sup>10</sup> It has been suggested that people's trust can only be restored through national dialogue, reconciliation, equitable sharing of peace dividends, and credible security sector reforms.<sup>11</sup> The reason most such attempts in Africa have failed is a lack of political will and financial commitment, and weak oversight from both the country's political leadership and the international guarantors of the peace accords.<sup>12</sup>

Most African countries affected by war are ethnically diverse (Somalia is the one major exception). Power seekers fuel and exploit ethnic differences to advance their political and economic aims. In a post-war country or newly independent state, like South Sudan, which must (re)build a state and a sense of nationhood at the same time, the latter typically loses out. The need to prioritize the delivery of goods and services—the basic infrastructure of the state—is obviously paramount. But if re(building) a sense of nationhood is ignored, it becomes much easier for “ethnpreneurs” to divide communities, making a return to open conflict more likely.<sup>13</sup> This is what happened in South Sudan in 2013.

### *Sudan and South Sudan and the Failure of Peacebuilding in the Post-CPA Era*

Since independence from British colonial rule in 1956, Sudan, once Africa's largest country, has been for over five decades the scene of both deadly conflicts and many “peace agreements dishonored.”<sup>14</sup> Though initially seen as North–South conflicts, they can also be understood as periphery–center struggles, as was the case in more recent conflicts in Darfur in the west, Blue Nile region, the Nuba Mountains in the center, and the Red Sea Hills in the east. These wars were triggered by feelings of exclusion from state power and resources as well as by race and religion.

The eventual breakup of Sudan in 2011 was the culmination of decades of war, distrust, and a series of unworkable agreements. The latter have been mediated by a host of international and East African intermediaries, all to no avail.<sup>15</sup> One of the most celebrated of these agreements was the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), premised on the unspoken

assumption that it would be better to split Sudan into two countries, which could exist side by side in peace and harmony, than remain one country that is torn apart by war. The CPA took 17 years of on-and-off negotiations between 1988 and 2005. When it was finally concluded, it promised the people of South Sudan a referendum on unity or separation. This was the most consequential item the southern leaders had put on the negotiating table.<sup>16</sup>

The promise of a referendum was the price for North–South peace. It was a monumental compromise. At the time, it was viewed as a diplomatic masterstroke by the mediators. Many in northern Sudan were unhappy with this and other provisions of the CPA, and that discontent plagued efforts to implement the agreement. For their part, people in southern Sudan seemed prepared to consent to anything provided that the CPA paved the way for separation. That the CPA promised things like enhanced security, stability, prosperity, and so on but could not deliver was secondary. Some observers saw this as a major flaw in the CPA, but South Sudanese were jubilant. They voted overwhelmingly for separation in the January 2011 referendum, as was expected. Euphoria ensued in the South when formal independence was granted seven months later.<sup>17</sup> For southerners, this was a culmination of a long and treacherous liberation struggle.<sup>18</sup> But widespread disappointment kicked in shortly thereafter.

The CPA was built on the premise of two viable states. Expectations for improvement in human security among all Sudanese people was high; state violence and all other types of violence inflicted on them would cease and good governance would become the order of the day—the so-called “peace dividend,” in other words. Instead, the CPA produced two countries that were so weighed down by violence that human security would not return in the absence of a massive national effort on both sides of the former conflict divide. The citizens of both countries, the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan, wanted their governments to focus on security and stability.

The Sudanese wanted an end to the wars in Darfur, Blue Nile, and southern Kordofan, as well as to bring welfare to the Red Sea region.

It was these demands that, along with the collapsing economy, runaway inflation, and rising commodity prices, eventually energized a popular uprising that finally deposed President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir in 2019 after 30 years of dictatorship. As of January 2020, the list of questions is long: will the new government that took office end the wars of the border areas, improve human rights, revive the economy, build a democracy, and

finally persuade the United States to remove Sudan from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism? It is difficult to predict how the new government will answer these questions so soon after Al-Bashir's fall.

The South Sudanese, for their part, wanted their new state to rein in rogue soldiers, professionalize the armed forces, and teach them about human rights and the primacy of the rule of law.<sup>19</sup> Juba has not been able to live up to the expectations of South Sudanese. As a result, the viability of the new state remains an open question.

During the early part of the CPA interim period, public opinion surveys revealed that popular skepticism in the accord was already growing.<sup>20</sup> These doubts were well-founded. After the breakup was effected, it soon became clear that neither government had a viable plan to exit from a war footing. Sudan remained at war within its new borders, especially along its new southern border; the newly independent South Sudan appeared unwilling to address its stark internal divisions and endemic corruption that fueled conflict. There were also problems of contested border areas, for which a boundary commission was established but which remained toothless because of Khartoum's interests in the region. As of January 2020, the status of the strategic territory of Abyei remains in limbo, subjecting it to violence at the hands of state-sponsored militias of the Messiriyya tribe that uses the region for cattle grazing and claims ownership of parts of it.<sup>21</sup> There were also failings around citizenship for "displaced" persons and losses of property.<sup>22</sup>

Of the key developments which illustrate the failure of the CPA and peacebuilding in general, three stand out.

#### *The Emergence of the "New South"*

The "new south" refers to Darfur, southern Kordofan, and southern Blue Nile, all of which remained in war, replete with abuses and atrocities akin to the actions of Khartoum in the south prior to 2005.<sup>23</sup> These three areas were at war with the center, which waged a brutal counterinsurgency campaign against them. Some of their armies had fought against Khartoum jointly with the southern armed opposition before the CPA.<sup>24</sup>

In signing the CPA, Khartoum had no intention of loosening its brutal grip on restive parts of the territory. The regime in Khartoum was built on Islamic militancy and the drive to create a theocratic state. It believed that in neutralizing the southern-based Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA), the CPA would allow it to crush SPLA-connected forces based

within the north. The mediators to the CPA were aware that Khartoum would backtrack on its commitments sooner or later, and effectively looked the other way.<sup>25</sup>

This was a prime example of the elite nature of peacebuilding outlined above: too little consideration was given to what national governments would do within their own borders, to their own communities, once conflict was ended between what the international community wrongly assumed were the only key stakeholders: Khartoum and the SPLA. By excluding the other armed groups from the main agreement—postponing resolution of all the issues around “other armed groups” to the implementation phase—the CPA became a catalyst for a return to war. Khartoum may have expected that it could rein them in in the north, but they simply reverted to bush war.

This renewed conflict complicated relations between the two new Sudans. Khartoum demanded that the SPLA forces within the north be disbanded, then soon after independence closed the borders. The potential engines of cooperation stalled, making it impossible for the citizens of the two states to move and interact. The planned reconstruction programs, on which so much else depended, could not get off the ground. Instead of the projected peace and harmony, the post-divorce period was not only highly volatile but also swiftly came to be dominated by grievances that the CPA not only failed to resolve but may have exacerbated. Ordinary Sudanese were left to try and pick up the pieces.<sup>26</sup>

### *Mass Violence Breaks Out in the South*

The second major event which reveals that the CPA failed in its main aim was the outbreak of mass violence in South Sudan in December 2013, a mere two-and-a-half years after the state achieved independence. The conflict was triggered by an attempt to seize power by a rival leadership faction within the ruling SPLM/A, but it quickly frayed into a vicious civil war. The people of South Sudan were divided partly on ethnic lines in ways that were unprecedented in its history. Ethnic-based killings, rape, and destruction of property reached almost genocidal levels over the three-year war.<sup>27</sup> Many questioned if the war might spell the end of the new state, at least in its 2011 configuration. And the peacemaking that ended the North–South war and resulted in the CPA came under sharp scrutiny: should South Sudan have been prepared better and for a longer period before moving to full independence?<sup>28</sup>

The insinuation that South Sudan was not a viable country angered South Sudanese. But the gruesome violence, following decades of a more or less unified struggle for independence, was hard to explain. Nationalist sentiments aside, it seemed palpably clear that the peace agreement and the independence that followed did not produce peace in the lives of South Sudanese.

Did the absence of peace following the CPA reflect a fundamental weakness in the accord? Or was it the unwillingness of the parties to adhere to the agreement that explains why conflict reigned? Or were the inestimably complex issues the civil war left behind simply too difficult to address in a single agreement? Similar questions might be asked of other failing peacebuilding initiatives in Africa.

### *Local Animosities Turn Inward*

Throughout the liberation war, South Sudanese had on many occasions turned the guns against one another—between and among ethnic groups, between civilians and the SPLA, and between factions of the SPLA. The negotiations leading up to the CPA never came to grips with this historical reality. In part, that was because these conflicts were often haphazardly reconciled or swept under the carpet so South Sudanese could keep their eyes on the big prize, their liberation from the north. But when the North–South war ended and South Sudan became independent, there was no more “Arab north” to collectively oppose. It did not take long for the stored-up animosities of the liberation era to explode into the open.

The resultant violence engulfed large parts of South Sudan, especially in the period leading up to its secession from the north. In 2008 and 2009, Jonglei, South Sudan’s most populous state, was wracked by cases of revenge attacks between the Nuer, Murle, and Dinka ethnic communities, with some of these incidents leading to the death of hundreds of people and theft of thousands of heads of cattle. This violence continued throughout that period and peaked again in 2011 and 2012 following independence.<sup>29</sup> In one episode that took place on January 1, 2012, a group of fighters from the Lou Nuer ethnic group attacked the town of Pibor, home of the Murle group. A week later on January 9, 2012, the Murle carried out a revenge attack on Lou Nuer and threatened to attack the other communities in Jonglei, the Dinka, and the Anyuak. This cycle has remained essentially unbroken since then, posing challenges to the authority of the state.<sup>30</sup>

*Time for a Rethink?*

In the Unity State region of South Sudan, numerous local groups and organizations, some church-led, some by traditional authorities, and youth initiatives, work on peacebuilding at the community level. Typically, their efforts are more sensitive to local dynamics and draw on personal relations with key actors on the ground, in ways that external or elite-driven initiatives cannot. But local peacebuilding efforts usually rely on international organizations for support in terms of funding, training, and capacity enhancement. Often this can prove to be a double-edged sword. While international agencies have injected financial resources into peacebuilding at the grassroots level across Africa, donor countries that finance their efforts, such as the Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, and Norway, still call the shots. Their interests are not always to the benefit of local peacebuilding.

Peacebuilders can also be handicapped by the restrictions imposed on them by host governments. In South Sudan, for example, non-governmental organizations that support peace work are not always free to move and live within the communities they support, as they are often harassed by security agencies suspicious that they are spies or saboteurs. Local agents need political space in which to operate, space which is not compromised by donor interests.

The developments since the signing of the CPA outlined above illustrate how national leaders can, and have, dragged their ethnic kin into communal wars. At the same time, it also hints at the capacity of these communities to resist being drawn into such wars. A more cost-effective means of affecting peaceful change would be for donors to channel this support directly into grassroots mechanisms of conflict management. The days of spending huge sums of money to facilitate high-level bargains and pacts among competing leaders and elites should be numbered. The record of these agreements in historical terms is woeful; most of these settlements collapse. A rethink might lead to more effective means to end the recurrent cycles of negotiations, which have not shown their worth in Sudan/South Sudan.<sup>31</sup>

## KEY LESSONS FROM SUDAN/SOUTH SUDAN

Any peace initiative that does not heed the cry for justice and accountability for crimes related to the way the wars were fought is not a process that can endure. But it is important to note that the concept of justice

often referenced by people affected by war is more encompassing than the narrow definition typically used in official discourse. What justice means at the grassroots level is about compensation for property destroyed and life opportunities that have been taken away; it is about rebuilding local and national institutions rendered dysfunctional by war, such as the sector agencies and the judiciary. It is not just about lives lost, important as their acknowledgment and commemoration may be. Mediators and peace sponsors need to better understand that reality. One young boy I interviewed in the aftermath of the outbreak of violence in Juba, South Sudan, in 2013 told me that “it would mean a lot to me if someone could just show me where my brother and uncle were buried after being murdered by state agents...that would only be humane and fair.” Another boy remarked that if the government institutions were fixed to stem corruption and “the state take its responsibility for our security and welfare, that would be enough justice...at least we would be assured that war will not return and those of us who have survived this violence can begin to rebuild our lives.”<sup>32</sup>

South Sudan’s many peace agreements commit the government and the international financiers and guarantors to a reconciliation between communities whose relationships were destroyed by war. Yet 15 years on from the signing of the CPA, South Sudan is yet to conduct a national reconciliation process. Nor can the state provide a level of services that might dissuade militants and others from banging the drums of war again. Most people who have taken up arms today or who have joined various opposition movements cite the government’s failure to facilitate national reconciliation. They see this failure as part of the ruling elite’s effort to cover up the abuses and atrocities that took place during the liberation war.

Nearly three-quarters of South Sudan’s population are below the age of thirty. Most, an entire generation from 1983 to 2005, did not attend school. Their only sense of who they are is their contribution to the war of liberation and a conviction that the government has failed them since leaving their guns behind. Large numbers of youth without any prospects for future employment has become one of the leading sources of political unrest and rising militancy. South Sudan might have a peace agreement that has accommodated the top leaders, but the communities where these young people hail from continue to suffer the violence of poverty, exclusion, and lack of opportunities.

Of all the major obstacles to peace and stability in South Sudan, the failure of security sector reform programs is arguably the most consequential. The list of objectives never achieved is long, but top on this list is the role of the security forces as protectors, not as above the law.

## CONCLUSION

Most African peacebuilding endeavors continue to focus on the implementation of political settlements, peace agreements, and compromise deals, all of which attempt to reconcile the warring parties and political contenders at the top. The assumption is that, since these conflicts are essentially triggered by competition for power among the politico-military class, a reconciliation forged between elites would trickle down to create peace at the grassroots level. This is an erroneous assumption. The evidence from Sudan/South Sudan's experience of negotiations and the peace agreements that emanate from them is clear: ignore ordinary citizens and their experiences of living through and fighting wars at your peril.

Once signed, peace agreements continue to be negotiated throughout the implementation period at all levels of society. All stakeholders and participants—mediators, development partners, and leaders—must pay close attention to this phase.

While those disparate actors attempting to broker a sustainable peace are dedicated and committed, they do not do enough to coordinate their efforts. Without that coordination, the efforts and the resources put in by the peacebuilders won't amount to much. Peace actors need to combine efforts to building bridges between them and governments.

It is natural for people who have lived through the trauma of war to expect that its end will mean that their suffering will stop. But the longer they have to wait for the “peace dividend,” the more likely they will think the leaders have forsaken them. What often follows next is a dangerous cocktail of allegations and counter-allegations over which ethnic group is getting richer and more powerful, which are controlling the state and its resources, and which are being shut out. This is how South Sudan plunged into its own civil war soon after independence. And it is how Sudan's Darfur, Kordofan, and Blue Nile regions relapsed into violent conflict after the CPA was signed. The space between the people and the government should never become so wide.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Prioritize security sector reform in South Sudan.* Today in South Sudan, armed men, and weapons continue to flow back and forth between the formal army and non-state militias, making the country's security forces the principal source of insecurity. While it is extremely important to pay attention to the security arrangements of any peace agreement, there has to be caution about privileging the fighting forces over the rest of the institutions. In South Sudan, the army and the Ministry of Defense were negotiated into becoming the biggest, most costly and unwieldy institution. With that, security sector reform has been badly undermined by leaders' interventions, such as President Salva Kiir's amnesties to all rebel fighters, militias, and other disgruntled armed men. This helped turn the SPLA into a dysfunctional institution that harms peace, rather than safeguard it. Reform efforts must be insulated from *ad hoc* decisions on amnesty and other measures by leaders that would undermine it.
2. *Focus more on managing societal expectations through the implementation phase of peace agreements.* The South Sudanese government's failure to manage expectations in the run-up to independence, creating unrealistic hopes among its citizens that peace and economic development would result swiftly once political freedom was achieved, helped to drive South Sudan back to all-out war within two years of independence. The same is true on the heels of the current efforts to implement the peace agreement. It is critical to pay attention to the process of continuous negotiation of the implementation process between the parties to the agreement, and to ensure that ordinary people in the various ethnic communities throughout the country are enlightened on the rewards of the peace process being worked out at the national level.
3. *Move beyond elite-bargains to meaningfully engage ordinary citizens in reconciliation and rebuilding peace.* At the time of writing in January 2020, new plans are under way to reconcile the two leaders, President Salva Kiir Mayardit and opposition leader, Riek Machar, who have been at the center of the country's political unrest and instability for nearly a decade. There is every reason to expect that this latest effort, as others have before it, is likely to collapse. Meanwhile, the experience of ordinary citizens living through and fighting the wars has been largely ignored in Sudan/South Sudan

as the assumption has been that the reconciliation and peace forged between elites would trickle down to the grassroots. This has not worked. In order to build a sustainable peace, the balance of effort must be directed to the grassroots. This includes engaging with, supporting and, in some cases, reviving traditional and cultural mechanisms that are critical for peacebuilding in South Sudan.

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## CHAPTER 21

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# Such a Long Journey: Peacebuilding After Genocide in Rwanda

*Terence McNamee*

## INTRODUCTION

Until 1994, Rwanda was among the world's most obscure countries. A tiny dot on the map of Africa—89 times smaller than its neighbor to the west—that was rarely studied, and even more rarely in the news. During the colonial period, Rwanda was an afterthought. The first colonial power, Germany, took little interest: Rwanda had few resources, and was too isolated and far from the coasts. It is said that for years after the Germans had arrived, the native *Banyarwanda* did not even realize they were a colonized people.<sup>1</sup> Germany's successor, Belgium, didn't do much in the colony either, other than maim its social fabric. During its first three decades as an independent country, which were scarred by communal massacres, civil wars, and dictatorships, Rwanda remained inconspicuous

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in the eyes of the world.<sup>2</sup> The genocide—and what came after—changed that.

Today, no country in Africa—arguably the world—divides opinion among scholars and commentators as fiercely as Rwanda. It has become a *cause célèbre* for billionaires, ex-statesmen, and celebrities. The polarized nature of the debate is generally expressed thus: Rwanda is a remarkable development success, risen from the ashes of mass ethnic slaughter, steered and safeguarded by a visionary leader; or, a case of autocratic recidivism, masked by implausibly rosy statistics and a bogus narrative of national unity, contrived by a strongman intent on staying in power forever. Essentially, this clash is all about one man: Rwanda's president, Paul Kagame.

No study on Rwanda can avoid this discussion, but it need not be the dominant focus. Large parts of Rwanda's post-conflict reconstruction speak for themselves—in terms of reduced poverty, improvements in public safety and security, sustained economic growth, less corruption, better health care, and vastly more women in government and politics. This chapter ranges across Rwanda's peacebuilding landscape, alighting on key developments since 1994; it does not privilege a single issue or policy. In a volume that addresses myriad themes and case studies of peacebuilding in Africa, as this book does, context is vital. The aim here is to set the broad contours in a way that invites comparisons, touching on how major transformations came about and how peace has been enhanced as a result.

This is not to gainsay the darker aspects of Rwanda's peacebuilding journey. Nor is it to suggest that Rwanda is out-of-the-woods; far from it. The state all but disintegrated a quarter century ago. Ten percent of its population of roughly ten million in 1994, including three out of every four Tutsis in the country, was killed during the genocide. Since then, an unspoken fear that Rwanda could slide back into the abyss has been the backcloth against which all key government policies are drawn.

This chapter reflects briefly on several parts of Rwanda's peacebuilding journey that are broadly perceived as successful works-in-progress. This includes some of the above-mentioned improvements as well as reforms in the areas of justice and security. It also interrogates the lack of competitive politics in Rwanda as a “necessary evil”—which requires some understanding of the complex dynamics which seeded the genocide—an argument frequently made in support of the government, explicitly or otherwise. Drawing on firsthand experience and various secondary sources, including a recent insider perspective of reconstruction

in Rwanda,<sup>3</sup> it also tries to identify the key drivers behind the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF)'s peacebuilding choices.

## ORIGINS OF GENOCIDE

The mist which covers Rwanda's famed "thousand hills" provides an apt metaphor for its precolonial history: much of it is shrouded in mystery. We know that for centuries there existed in this hilly region a kind of feudal monarchy, distinct in its social system and traditions, comprised of pluralistic clans. The clans were made up of three groups, the majority Hutu (84 percent),<sup>4</sup> the Tutsi (15 percent), and the Twa (1 percent), which together formed the *Banyarwanda* people. The cattle owners, the Tutsi, were the ruling class. Although categories were somewhat fluid, and conflicts between the wealthy and poor may have been common, there existed some shared identity of living under the same royal authority.

The Belgian colonial administration amplified historic divisions by consolidating local power in the hands of the minority Tutsi chiefs and removing traditional Hutu public figures. Tutsis were given monopolies over land rights and access to socio-economic opportunities, hardening a sense of ethnic inferiority among the majority Hutu. In 1932, the Belgians introduced identity cards which stated the ethnicity of the bearer. The labels "Hutu" and "Tutsi" were thus formalized in everyday life. All the while, competition over scarce land intensified as Rwanda's population increased dramatically. When Tutsi leaders began clamoring for independence in the late 1950s, the Belgians switched tactics and fomented a "Hutu peasant revolution." Tens of thousands of Tutsis were killed in the ensuing violence and many more fled to neighboring countries. Independence occasioned more massacres against Tutsis, retaliations, and a further exodus. The first Hutu nationalist regime could not provide any stable grounds for cohabitation. It was eventually overthrown in the early 1970s by another Hutu nationalist, Juvenal Habyarimana, who imposed a measure of stability through an iron-clad dictatorship. Over the next two decades, the conflict between Hutus and Tutsis began to merge with struggles between the forces of democracy—which included moderate Hutu leaders—and tyranny.

By the mid-1980s in Uganda, a highly unified, battle-tested group of young Rwandan Tutsi exiles had formed the RPF. Its aim: the liberation of their motherland. The RPF invaded Rwanda in 1990, overrunning Habyarimana's army, but were pushed back by reinforcements from

France, with whom the regime had close ties. The subsequent de facto partitioning of Rwanda led to peace negotiations between the government and the RPF, tit-for-tat killings, and new massacres. Extremists in President Habyarimana's regime promoted a new "Hutu Power" bloc, which suppressed moderate Hutu voices and promoted hatred and fear of Tutsis. External pressure eventually forced Habyarimana to agree to ratify the Arusha Peace Accords, which had paved the way for the deployment of a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force to Rwanda (UNAMIR) in 1993 to assist in their implementation. But it was not to be. Returning home from a meeting in Tanzania on April 6, 1994, Habyarimana's plane was shot down on its approach to Kigali's airport.

In its scope and intensity, the hundred-day genocide which followed was perhaps unprecedented in human history. Upward of a million Rwandans—some moderate Hutus but mostly Tutsis—were killed by their fellow Rwandans, usually in broad daylight, often by militia and ordinary people using machetes, garden implements, or other tools. Hutu extremists nearly achieved their aim of extermination. Rwanda's constricted geography and the mass participation in the killings meant that Tutsis had few ways to escape the slaughter. Peacekeeping forces on the ground were degraded, rather than reinforced, by the UN after the genocide began, permitting them to bear witness to it but not much else.<sup>5</sup> The symbolic date on which the genocide was brought to an end is July 4, 1994, when the RPF took the capital, though it would take another two weeks for the civil war to be declared over and the RPF announce the creation of a new government.

Those who were in Rwanda at the time described the situation in apocalyptic terms, such was the extent of societal collapse; a land of walking ghosts.<sup>6</sup> Analysts predicted that it would take more than a generation for the country to recover in any substantial way, if it ever would.

## BUILDING PEACE

The one advantage enjoyed by the RPF in this otherwise awful predicament was that they could call the shots. Its military victory was total. This allowed the RPF to consolidate its power across the country over the next few years. It persuaded former enemies and ordinary Hutus to change allegiances; dealt militarily with the numerous threats to the new political dispensation, including former *génocidaires* within and outside its borders; and defined a post-conflict future for Rwanda. This "victors"

peace” had common features with experiences in Uganda, Eritrea, and Angola, where strong cliques who had triumphed in civil wars exerted a firm hold over reconstruction. But only the leader of the RPF, Paul Kagame, would gain an international reputation for building a stable and functioning state. This perception inspired a level of donor goodwill and generosity toward Rwanda that eluded others.

What followed genocide in Rwanda was not all by design. The devastating wars and interventions in neighboring Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) shaped the RPF’s policies and programs in ways that may never have been predicted when the RPF seized power, as did other regional and global developments in the 1990s. What is more, the plans agreed upon and put in place by the RPF were not influenced solely by the genocide and its aftermath. Jean Paul Kimonyo, drawing on internal documents, traces the historical antecedents of the RPF’s worldview. He explains its transformative ambitions for Rwanda as arising, in part, from ideas and myths of a “Grand Rwanda,” and a desire to break with the country’s highly stratified, monarchical past. The genocide focused RPF minds in unimaginable ways. But the desire to develop the country and bring about a fundamental shift in Rwandans’ thinking germinated before the events of 1994.

The so-called “Urugwiro Village discussions,” named after and held at the presidential residence, took place over several months in 1998/9. Firmly guided by RPF leaders but involving representatives of all parts of society, the discussions helped frame the government’s vision and policies for building peace and reconstructing the country (enshrined in law a few years later), which became manifest in some of the key transformations described below. Of overarching importance was the commitment to align all initiatives to the aim of strengthening national unity. A National Unity and Reconciliation Commission was established in 1999 “to educate, sensitize and mobilize the population in areas of national unity and reconciliation.” Also notable was the strong emphasis placed on independent, homegrown solutions. The pledge to make the RPF “the motor of government that would bring about real change in the country”<sup>7</sup> put paid—or should have—to any hopes people might have harbored that free-flowing democracy might be encouraged or tolerated.

### *Democracy*

“Those who look in from outside ignore the fact that competitive democracy requires sustained social cohesion,” wrote President Paul Kagame in an Op-ed for London’s *Financial Times* in 2010.<sup>8</sup> Rhetorically, if not practically, few guiding principles to emerge from the Urugwiro Village discussions became as sacrosanct as this in the RPF’s approach to governing. Democratic legitimacy would derive from Rwandans’ own values, traditions, and life experiences, not criteria pushed by donors.

Decentralization has been a central motif in post-genocide governance: non-partisan elections are held at the local level, where all citizens can participate in community planning and initiate processes to hold civil servants accountable. (Kagame’s often-heard refrain that the Western democratic model in its entirety will not be right for everyone has become something of an Africa-wide mantra.) In the face of criticism, his supporters have leaned on credible research to explain why, in conditions of acute poverty and stark societal divisions like Rwanda, competitive politics *increases* the likelihood of violence (whereas in middle- and higher-income countries, it reduces it).<sup>9</sup>

No one can pretend that there is a real electoral choice at the national level; or that participating in public life as a critic of government policy does not carry grave risks. Kagame won re-election in 2017 with a 99 percent share of the vote after securing a constitutional change that allowed him a third 7-year term in office. He is genuinely popular, to be sure; but also widely feared. The amended constitution would permit him to rule until 2034. More proof, critics say, his heart is a dictator’s, not a democrat’s. Kagame or no Kagame, whether Rwanda can cope with peppy democracy is not an academic matter. The introduction of competitive elections (under pressure from the West) in the early 1990s is thought by many to have tilled the field for the later genocide, as Hutu-led political parties campaigned on virulent anti-Tutsi platforms in a fragmented political landscape.

It begs the question: why does Rwanda even bother with elections? Popular legitimacy is clearly a factor. Even if Rwanda’s are less elections than “election-like events,” it is still hard to convey authority in their absence. Rwanda’s elections have been geared toward endorsing the status quo, yet they have still served as useful litmus tests for the direction of the country. Campaigns and elections have also afforded opportunities to test loyalties and manage internal dissent. Suffice to say, no one in the

President's Office is losing sleep over Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), which scores Rwanda's elections 2 out of 10 for (not) being "free and fair."<sup>10</sup>

### *Security*

The reform of militaries and security institutions in post-conflict environments is one of the thorniest parts of peacebuilding. All too often, such reforms fail to achieve their targets. More damaging, they are also exploited in struggles over state power between emerging actors, creating new triggers for instability.<sup>11</sup> Post-1994 Rwanda faced an additional challenge: one side of the reform equation had committed genocide against the other.

Between 1997 and 2007, 60,000 ex-combatants were demobilized. This included the ex-*Forces Armées Rwandais* (FAR, the pre-1994, largely Hutu, Rwandan government army) and the various armed groups involved in the genocide—the former *génocidaires*—most of whom had fled to the DRC, then eventually returned to Rwanda.<sup>12</sup> During this period, the RDF (the Rwandan Defense Force, the name given to the new national army in 2002) was considerably reduced. In broad terms, the reintegration of ex-fighters back to civilian life has been successful, assessed against other disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs in Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Insofar as peacebuilding, the experience of the disparate forces brought into a united RDF has drawn particular attention.<sup>14</sup> Integration served as a conflict management strategy in Rwanda. Ex-FAR soldiers and rebels now serving in the RDF were deployed near their native communities to help establish trust in the new dispensation among wary locals. The wars in the Congo aided integration, too. Under fire and around the campfires, former enemies forged strong bonds and demystified toxic myths from back home. Within Rwanda, workshops based on the traditional Rwandan concept of *Ingando*—a military encampment or assembly area—were used to instill a sense of national identity and overcome mutual fear and suspicion. *Ingando* was both an ethos and a means for promoting stability, reconciliation, and professionalization within the armed forces.<sup>15</sup> By the late 2000s, the RDF was in the vanguard of peacebuilding. "Heroes at home and abroad,"<sup>16</sup> the soldiers had become an exemplar for reconciliation, helped in no small measure by their growing international reputation: professional, disciplined, and courageous troops. The RDF was called on to contribute peacekeepers and mission commanders to Darfur and Mali.

### *Justice and Unity*

The RPF knew that building cohesion within Rwanda's armed forces—a single institution, part of but also outside society—was going to be easier than in society at large. For decades, hatred of the other had been cultivated by ethno-nationalists through speeches and media. The language of dehumanization reached its apogee at the outbreak of genocide, with the government-allied radio station, RTLM, imploring listeners to exterminate the Tutsi *inyenzi* or “cockroaches.”

In common with nation-building everywhere, the RPF promotes a history of (pre- and post-colonial) Rwanda that is partly true and partly imagined. Rwanda's official policy of unity and reconciliation exalts rather than merely emphasizes Rwandan-ness. Laws meant to keep the ethnic genie in the bottle are expansive. Categorizations of “Hutu” and “Tutsi” have been expunged from public life. Strong restrictions have been imposed on how the genocide can be discussed publicly in Rwanda.

Nationwide “de-ethnicization” has taken many forms, most recently the program *Ndi Umunyarwanda*, which means, “I am Rwandan” (not Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa). Consistent with other government initiatives, officially aimed at overcoming tribalism and building a national identity, *Ndi Umunyarwanda* is also about shoring up a single narrative of the country's past, present, and future. Critics say that it only encourages Hutus to apologize to Tutsis, reinforcing the former's social positioning as *génocidaire*.<sup>17</sup>; others suggest that it is a troubling echo of other top-down, de-ethnicization programs: based on the erroneous premise that if “ethnic divisions can be made, they can also be unmade.”<sup>18</sup>

*Ndi Umunyarwanda* was established in 2013, a year after the community-based *Gacaca* courts finished their work. Following the Urugwiyo Village discussions, the RPF turned to *Gacaca*—a traditional forum meaning “justice on the grass”—out of practical necessity: no conventional means to hold ordinary Rwandans who committed genocide accountable existed. There were simply too many cases; nearly two million, or about 1 in 5, Rwandans were implicated.<sup>19</sup> The majority of trials ended in convictions, with crimes against property resulting in fines paid to victims or community work; and prison sentences for murder and other serious crimes. At a minimum, masses of isolated Rwandans finally had their pain and frustration recognized.

As with so much else, opinions are divided on Rwanda's mode of devolved justice, which was also meant to promote forgiveness by victims, ownership of guilt by perpetrators, and national reconciliation.<sup>20</sup> Its

supporters argue that *Gacaca*, for all its flaws, probably saved Rwanda.<sup>21</sup> The most tangible benefit of *Gacaca* for many was in simply discovering where their relatives were buried. Its limitations—no legal representation for defendants, a bias toward confessions—were not atypical of other transitional justice mechanisms. But the absence of Tutsis facing trial exposed the government to allegations that *Gacaca* was, ultimately, another vehicle for the RPF to further centralize and consolidate its grip on power, especially in the countryside.

### *Economic Vision*

Rwanda’s “Vision 2020” strategy was launched in 2000, another product of the discussions at Urugwiro Village. Unlike most countries’ strategic frameworks for their future development, which involve changing course, building on or reversing existing projects, the RPF essentially had a blank slate. The goal—transform post-genocide Rwanda into a middle-income country by 2020—was hugely ambitious for a poor, rural, landlocked country with few natural resources. The Vision 2020 document, and subsequent policies oriented to it, would be critical to building peace and consolidating the RPF’s legitimacy.<sup>22</sup>

The rhetoric of an investment-friendly, modernizing economy was supported by substantial policy shifts. Rwanda became one of the staunchest advocates of regional integration. In a context where neighbors are most frequently associated with conflict—and tensions flare-up over the intersection of national struggles, as happens often between Rwanda and Uganda or the DRC<sup>23</sup>—this can only further peace in the region.

But regionalization has also demanded a fundamental shift in people’s minds. The adoption of a new economic identity—tech-savvy, service-oriented, outward-looking, and linked strongly to East Africa—has placed a strain on the rhythms and culture of Rwanda’s countryside, historically closed to the outside world. For some time yet, public officials will need to convince local populations that rapid, dislocating economic change will be beneficial to them in the long run.

During his first two terms in office, President Kagame proved exceptionally adept at managing a frequent scourge of one-party dominated states: patrimonial politics. Described by some scholars as “developmental patrimonialism,”<sup>24</sup> the RPF’s approach has avoided its worst excesses (rampant corruption and inefficiencies) by maintaining internal (party) and external (state) control in ways that permit long-term investments.

Typically, networks exist on short-term gains. Kagame has also shrewdly pushed the mantra of African self-reliance while the government pocketed substantial donor support, on which the first phase of Vision 2020 relied heavily. Their sustained goodwill was based, partly, on sheer performance. Between 2001 and 2015, overall poverty reduced by 19.8 percent while extreme poverty declined by 23.7 percent.<sup>25</sup> Rwanda became one of the world's fastest growing economies year on year; the only low-income country in the World Bank's top 30 "easiest places to do business;" and a mini tourism mecca, increasing revenues from visitors from US \$27 million in 2000 to US \$438 million in 2017. Donors also lauded the government on delivery: Rwanda walked the talk on corruption as almost no other aid recipient did. Donors praised the government's seemingly ceaseless attention to accountability, transparency, and efficiency in deploying its scarce resources to key sectors of the economy.

Despite sharp criticisms on human rights and rule-of-law issues, donors have remained largely supportive of the executive's domination of the state apparatus. This is likely to continue, provided the RPF's commitment to building a capable state and its intolerance of corruption—Rwanda now beats the likes of Italy and Greece in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)—doesn't wane.<sup>26</sup>

### *Women*

As is increasingly the case in wars, women suffered disproportionately in the violence of the early 90s and especially the genocide. It is estimated that between 250,000 and 500,000, mostly Tutsi, women were exposed to some form of gender-based violence, mainly rape. Two-thirds of the raped victims later tested positive for the HIV/AIDS disease.<sup>27</sup> In the aftermath of the genocide, women were more numerous—up to 70 percent of the population in parts of the country—due to the higher rates of death, exile, or imprisonment of men. Women's mental health and economic well-being were shattered. Hutu women faced the added burden of being socially excluded and shamed due to their husbands' suspected role in the killings.

A seemingly hopeless situation opened the way for women to play leading roles in repairing a broken society. Without much planning or coordination, at least initially, women began to distribute assistance and relief to communities, mediate and resolve disputes, and advocate for peace. Women increasingly became involved in shaping policy, driving

socio-economic change and even serving as judges on *Gacaca*, once the exclusive preserve of “wise and respected old men” (*inyangamugayo*). The emergence of women in important, non-traditional roles after the genocide stirred and intersected with conversations at the national level. Ideas and experiences were eventually co-opted into the RPF’s policymaking—as a core tenet. Set in Rwanda’s 2003 Constitution, a law requiring that women hold a minimum 30 percent of elected positions would be improved upon in practice in ways that may never have been foreseen. In 2018, 49 women sat in Rwanda’s parliament, which represented 61 percent of total seats—the highest proportion in the world. Four of the seven Supreme Court seats were also held by women.

The centrality of women to all parts of Rwanda’s peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery is distinct in the African context. In doing so, it has accelerated the process of overcoming the entrenched patriarchy once common in Rwanda and still pervasive across the continent.

## CONCLUSION

The most striking feature of Rwanda’s peacebuilding journey is also the most obvious: there has been no large-scale violence inside the country since the genocide. More than a quarter of a century of peace—however uneasy—has made possible important advances across society. In assessing whether it can be sustained for the next 25 years, several questions arise.

Popular support for the RPF is, outwardly, very strong. But no one knows where the line between fear, belief, and moral duty lies: how many support the government’s narrative in the name of peace and stability, but nothing more? And how long might that pact survive? Similarly, the balance of opinion suggests that de-ethnicization overall is working<sup>28</sup>—but how much that is acted out by individuals in society is genuinely felt internally is an open question.<sup>29</sup> This is least clear in the countryside, where more than 80 percent of Rwandans live. Interactions between survivors and participants in the genocide are more immediate and personal in rural areas, where unresolved material claims still persist.<sup>30</sup> Community-level peace processes have proliferated in the past two decades, though often it is unclear whether they are government-sanctioned or government-initiated. In the country’s increasingly dynamic capital, Kigali, differences are less salient. Improved education and opportunities in the city are resulting in new identities, not necessarily just national ones. And most of Rwanda’s current population of 12 million

were born after the genocide. They live with its legacy. But how has their “inherited trauma” impacted their worldview?

Outcomes in post-conflict settings hinge to a great extent on whether local stakeholders are actively committed to peacebuilding or not. On the face of it, Rwanda is a model on two levels. National government has maintained a firm grip on its reform agenda, based on its own assessment of the country’s needs. High priority is given to relations with donors and partners; they are active in areas where national capacity and resources are lacking, but rarely encroach on state sovereignty. As one scholar described Rwanda’s approach, “Don’t tell us what to do; help us to do what we want to do.”<sup>31</sup> The second level is local agency. For all the criticism of its muscular, top-down approach, Rwanda has exercised state power in ways that give voice and legitimacy to communities and grassroots movements. *Gacaca* illustrates the scale of Rwanda’s ambition in this regard. Understanding its complex origins and legacy, however, must be part of any lessons gleaned from Rwanda’s successes in local peacebuilding.<sup>32</sup>

The changes evident in Rwanda since 1994—in people’s safety and security, in its economy and governance structures—are too substantial to be dismissed as a “veil of peacebuilding,” as some critics allege. Developments in the Great Lakes region reinforce the point. Chronic insecurity and violence in its southern neighbor, Burundi, whose policies toward its own Hutu-Tutsi divide were once touted as an antidote to Rwanda’s, show no sign of abating. Nor in the DRC, despite the presence of one of the world’s largest UN peacekeeping missions for 20 years and counting. The ruinous impact of official looting and rent-seeking in the wider region attests to another key feature of Rwanda’s peacebuilding trajectory that cannot be minimized: its strong record on corruption.

That is not to say romantic notions of the post-genocide “miracle” ought to go unchallenged. In building peace and a functioning state, the RPF has defied the famous entreaty of Prince Johnson, for a time Liberia’s most powerful rebel leader: “the gun that liberates shall not rule!” Doubtless, Rwandans have asked themselves countless times: can their peacebuilding journey continue without “the leadership that initiated it?”<sup>33</sup> Even if there is a popular consensus which favors stability over a free press and other liberties—a binary choice—the rationalizations for the RPF’s seemingly permanent claim on state power are thinning. More and more, the stifling of political dissent jars with the progress and openness evident in other spheres of Rwandan society.

President Kagame once despaired of his critics: “I have all these names associated with me. Some of which I accept, others which are not fair.

God created me in a very strange way.”<sup>34</sup> Of the many complexities in the character of Africa’s most analyzed statesman and the main architect of Rwanda’s post-genocide stability, one bears particular attention going forward: he knows—as well as anyone—that autocracies and dictatorships are almost never removed without bloodshed.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Learn from failed transitions from liberation to governance, and reform accordingly.* The RPF has clearly learned from the mistakes of other liberation leaders who have transitioned into power, but more relevant to its current peacebuilding phase would be a systematic examination of failures at the cultural and institutional level of the movements. In a different way, running contemporaneously to post-genocide Rwanda’s journey, South Africa’s democratic path after 1994 from rainbow nation to failing state offers a salutary warning to the RPF. Once the global standard for reconciliation and peacebuilding, the dramatic fall in state capacity and effectiveness in South Africa between 2010 and 2020 has shattered its international reputation, degraded social cohesion, and rendered it incapable of improving public safety (South Africa has the 5th highest murder rate in the world<sup>35</sup>; and the highest rate of rape).<sup>36</sup> During its first decade and a half in power, the ruling liberation party made significant strides in addressing the vast inequities and distortions wrought by colonialism and apartheid, but its failure to change the way it governed is largely to blame for the dramatic backsliding South Africa has experienced in the past ten years. One-party dominance and a pervasive sense of entitlement within the African National Congress (ANC) bred overconfidence in the efficacy of its internal processes and policies—such as cadre deployment rather than merit-based appointment—which have proved ruinous in the context of (attempted) democratic consolidation.
2. *Make “succession” less forbidding by gradually creating more channels for discussion and debate.* The obsession with whether or not President Kagame is grooming a successor intensifies year on year. The risk to stability and growth of a disorderly succession is very high. Rwanda has done much to promote social channels for discourse and redress. A gradual opening up of political channels for

dialogue and power negotiation will help institutions adjust to the prospect of a new leader over time.

3. *Encourage multilateral approaches and solutions for the Great Lakes region.* Sustainable, long-term peace and security in Rwanda is closely linked to the rest of the Great Lakes region, where conflicts feed off and reinforce each other. The actions of the UN and donors in the region have arguably made things worse. Collaborative multi-lateral solutions led by the regional states are the only hope of managing the displacement of millions of people within countries and across borders, alleviating extreme poverty and the endemic violence communities are exposed to, especially in the region's peripheries.

## NOTES

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6. See, for instance, Philip Gourevitch, "After the Genocide," *The New Yorker*, December 18, 1995.
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9. See Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places* (London: Vintage Books, 2010).
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15. Edmonds, Mills, and McNamee, “Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration,” 42–43. The use of *Ingando* camps in wider society has drawn criticism from some scholars who depict them as less nation-building platforms than repressive reeducation facilities, see Sue Thomson, *Whispering Truth to Power: Everyday Resistance to Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013); Anna Purdeкова, “Rwanda’s Ingando Camps: Liminality and the Reproduction of Power,” Oxford University Refugee Studies Centre *Working Paper 80* (2011).
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## CHAPTER 22

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# Crisis and Transition in the Sahel

*Paul Melly*

## INTRODUCTION

Africa is frequently depicted as the most chronically unstable part of the world. War, terrorism, and the mass displacement of populations have not been uncommon. Peacebuilding has posed complex challenges for African societies and states affected by conflict and instability and for their partners—both fellow Africans and international organizations and allies. But Africa has also exhibited a notable readiness to assume the tasks of crisis management and engage in mutual cooperation between states to restore stability through diplomacy, negotiation, and the deployment of intervention forces and peacekeepers. The continent's capacity for common action is one of its greatest strengths.

Of the African regions currently suffering crisis, conflict, and threats to peaceful normality, the Sahel is among the most challenging—geographically vast, with a tough, arid environment exposed to the pressures of climate change, a thin economic base, and some of the world's highest levels of poverty. But it is also a region characterized by a strong culture of collaborative inter-governmental action in tackling common problems

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and is set within the wider context of a West Africa with a long track record of peer review in support of essential standards of governance, and common engagement in conflict resolution and confronting threats to security.

This chapter tracks the evolution of efforts to contain the threats to peace and security in the Sahel—threats that have become gradually more serious over the past 15 years, despite a steady reinforcement of the national, regional, and international campaign to stabilize the region.

## PEACEBUILDING IN THE SAHEL

### *Setting the Scene*

Some years ago, a senior European Union (EU) official was asked to list the policies for EU engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa. His answer: “Sahel, Sahel, Sahel.”

This vignette illustrates how far the restoration of security and stability across this vast region—extending from the Atlantic coast of Mauritania and Senegal to the eastern fringes of Chad—has become a major concern for the international community, and for European policymakers in particular. The crisis that now subjects large parts of the Sahel to extreme stress, with sometimes devastating human consequences, is widely perceived to pose threats to other regions of Africa and to Europe in a way that the long-running problems of the Great Lakes region or even Somalia supposedly do not. Whether that is a fair judgment is a moot point. Western governments and institutions have been prepared to commit not just money for security and development but also significant numbers of their own military personnel to the cause of stabilization and peacebuilding in the Sahel. In the latter half of 2019, a broadening out of the active military engagement was evident. A wider range of partners, to collaborate with the current principal actors—the Sahel countries themselves, France, and the United Nations (UN)—in the peacekeeping operations and proactive military action, was enlisted. The aim: to restore a measure of security and calm to a region where violence has become steadily more frequent, more brutal, and wider in geographical reach since 2016.

Concerns about terrorism and informal migration are the headline grabbers that induce European political actors to fret about this vast region lying just south of the Sahara and, thus, just a couple of borders away from the southern Mediterranean boundary of the EU. But there

is also an acknowledgment that the serious scale of the Sahel crisis threatens the peace and gradual development progress of West Africa as a whole, including the coastal areas that have been the drivers of recent progress toward prosperity. Over the course of 2019 and beyond, this concern increasingly began to impinge upon the thinking of governments in the region and that of key international partners. Two decades of mostly sustained economic growth and democratic consolidation could be in jeopardy, with profound consequences for the equilibrium of many Sub-Saharan societies and for their interaction with the outside world.

That is the context for the present concern with peacebuilding in the Sahel—which can fairly be described as a “region,” despite its great geographical extent, and the diversity of physical environments, social and economic contexts, governance, and state polities that it encompasses. There are shared characteristics and influences that prevail almost universally; the strategies that have been developed for managing these problems, and for trying to control the negative impacts, are also largely shared and often mutualized through regional structures for cooperation and partnerships with external sources of support.

### *An Evolving Internationalization—And Mutualization—Of Crisis Management*

The decade from 2010 to 2020 has seen responses to conflict and instability move from essentially the national—in which the official security actors have been national governments operating within national territory—to the regional and international. That is, in part, a reflection of the increasingly cross-border nature of the threats to stability in the Sahel; but it is also a measure of the extent to which countries outside the region have come to perceive Sahelian insecurity as a potential danger to their own societies.

There is a long history of rebellions in north-east Mali, as sections of the indigenous Tuareg population sought autonomy or even independence for a new national entity, *Azawad*, that would reflect their specific identity and interests. Tuaregs in adjacent areas of Niger also rebelled, largely in pursuit of this agenda. But prior to 2011, the governments of Mali and Niger sought to restore order and state control through campaigns by their own national security forces or through negotiation. Algeria, and sometimes Libya, would frequently play a mediating role, but the military actors on the ground were national.

The first decade of the twenty-first century also saw the emergence of jihadist terrorism in Sahelian countries, with militants—many of whom had migrated south from the former civil conflict in Algeria—engaged in trafficking and, in particular, the kidnap for ransom or occasional outright murder, of Westerners. In Mauritania, they also began to challenge the state, notably attacking the isolated Al-Ghallaouia military base in the north-east, in December 2007. Meanwhile, Nigeria treated the emergence of the militant group Boko Haram in Borno state—which lies within the Sahel—as a purely internal security problem, strongly resisting suggestions that it should invite help from neighboring countries.

All these countries benefitted from external training support from Western partners—particularly the United States and France, with the United Kingdom also involved to some extent. The US-led Flintlock exercise, involving troops from several countries, became an annual event, while France organized the Guidimakha exercise with several Sahel states under its RECAMP training initiative in 1998. Outside countries were not, however, significantly involved in active operations in the region.

There had always been one distinct exception to this pattern—Chad, where French forces had been based for decades. President Idriss Déby Itno is a close ally of Paris. In the past, French troops have come directly to his aid to help drive back internal rebellions that threatened his hold on political power. Such uprisings have been fueled frequently by personal or even family rivalries within the regime's own clan support base. France's security support for Déby has been quite different in nature from its operations elsewhere in the Sahel, where it has been exercised in defense of state authority rather than a particular political regime. Across the rest of the region, the pattern of crisis management by national authorities had continued through the first decade of this century.

### *Mali Crisis—A Step Change*

The situation was transformed by the collapse of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya in 2011, following an internal rebellion and an Anglo-French military air campaign. This coincided with a renewed upsurge in Tuareg separatist activism in north-east Mali—a movement that was dramatically accelerated after fighters of Malian Tuareg origin, who had been serving the Gaddafi regime, fled home after their camp's defeat in the Libyan conflict.

Bringing substantial weaponry with them, they joined the reemerging separatist movement, the *Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA). This group then allied with the jihadist militants already present in northern Mali and launched an offensive in early 2012 that rapidly took control of settlements across the north, including Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu, as the morale of the Malian army collapsed. Eventually, after demoralized soldiers had displaced the elected president in Bamako, the situation stabilized, leaving government authority limited to the southern half of the country, while the jihadists pushed aside the MNLA and imposed Islamist rule on the main northern towns.

This was the transformative event that internationalized issues of security and peacebuilding in the Sahel. It was quite clear then that the Malian army would be incapable of defeating the jihadists and restoring state authority in the north. The *Forces Armées Maliennes* (FAMA) lacked not only the necessary equipment, desert fighting expertise, and strategic planning capacity, but also the cohesive institutional culture required for the fight. As such, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) member countries began to develop plans for a force to restore government control in northern Mali. Over more than two decades, ECOWAS had developed a political culture of cooperative diplomacy and military intervention to tackle threats to security and stability in member states, notably in Liberia and, later, Sierra Leone.<sup>1</sup>

Confronted with the jihadist takeover of northern Mali and soldiers' assumption of power in Bamako, regional leaders pursued both political and military tracks. They put pressure on the army putschists in order to secure the installation of a constitutionally legitimate interim head of state—the parliamentary speaker, Dioncounda Traoré—and they began to plan the dispatch of a regional military force to recover the north. These plans for military intervention met with skepticism in the international community: many members of the UN Security Council<sup>2</sup> felt that while the scheme was legitimate in principle, it would be far more difficult than the previous ECOWAS interventions in small, coastal states. While France was sympathetic to the basic idea, senior U.S. officials felt that there was a serious risk of catastrophic failure, amidst the heat and vast distances of the Sahel and the Sahara.<sup>3</sup> After much discussion on the margins of the Security Council, the major UN powers indicated that authorization for the ECOWAS force might be forthcoming, but only after extensive preparation.

In little more than a year, the management of security and peace-building in the Sahel was transformed from being an essentially internal national affair into, first, an issue of regional political and, potentially, military action—and then, second, into a question of international concern and authority. It soon became apparent that ECOWAS lacked the capacity on its own to organize the large-scale military intervention that would be required. It would need not only international authorization from the UN, but also substantial practical military strategic and logistical support from international allies. By the end of 2012, the proposed ECOWAS intervention was still at the negotiation and planning stage, with the operation tentatively penciled in for some time in 2013, after the Security Council had finally given authorization on December 20, 2012, via UN Resolution 2085.<sup>4</sup> But the situation was then dramatically transformed by events on the ground, which provoked an immediate full internationalization of the response to this crisis.

### *French and UN Intervention*

In January 2013, large numbers of jihadist fighters traveling in technicals (armed jeeps) gathered on the fringes of central Mali and then attacked Konna, the northern-most town in government hands, on January 9 and 10. Government troops resisted but were clearly unable to hold out for long. Interim President Traoré feared that the militants might also seize the key garrison town of Sévaré, just 56 km further on which also served as the effective security gateway to southern Mali and the road to Bamako itself. Traoré sought assistance from France's President, François Hollande, who dispatched helicopter gunships from Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) to help hold the line at Konna until more forces could arrive. Over several days, 4,000 French troops flew into Mali from Europe, and arrived by land with armored vehicles from Côte d'Ivoire. AFISMA, the African intervention force that had been in preparation, with 2,900 troops, was rapidly accelerated. Malian troops then joined the French and African forces in launching a counteroffensive which, backed by air power, paratroopers, and all the paraphernalia of a modern European military, rapidly regained control of all urban centers across northern Mali.

This dramatic shift in power on the ground produced both military and political effects. The jihadists mostly melted away, occasionally putting up fierce resistance, notably in the *Adrar des Ifoghas* massif in the Sahara.

By contrast, their erstwhile, secular Tuareg separatist allies in the MNLA agreed to enter a political process. Under the June 2013 Ouagadougou Agreement, they forswore the use of armed force to pursue their ends in return for a place at the negotiating table. Groups that refused to sign up to the Ouagadougou Agreement were formally categorized as terrorists and potential targets of further military action.

Meanwhile, given the continuing insecurity and the deep mistrust bequeathed by the events of the previous several years, the African intervention force was “rehatted” as a UN peacekeeping force, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), whose membership was gradually internationalized. The French emergency intervention force, Operation Serval, was also reorganized into a long-term deployment across the Sahel (Opération Barkhane), with a fixed troop strength of 4,500, headquartered in Ndjamena, Chad, with bases in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. The European Union also established a technical mission (EUTM) to retrain the Malian army, at Koulikoro, near Bamako.<sup>5</sup>

These developments completed a fundamental transformation of the effort to restore peace and stability to the Sahel in both military and political terms. Military and security force operations had moved rapidly from being a national affair into one that was both regional and international, and on a large scale. Meanwhile, the Ouagadougou Agreement launched a fresh effort to resolve long-standing northern discontents through political negotiation. Previous separatist uprisings in the 1990s and the mid-2000s were also provisionally resolved through political settlements, but these had not proved durable. The question was whether, in this newly internationalized military context, a fresh political process could prove any more sustainably successful.

## A PARALLEL IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

The tackling of the Boko Haram crisis was also internationalized, shortly afterwards, but in a slightly different manner. The driver here, in the Lake Chad Basin, was the fact that the activity of the militant group was also becoming a threat to the security of neighboring countries—Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.<sup>6</sup> Thus Nigeria came under huge pressure to rethink and look toward a more mutualized management of the problem. In 2014 Nigeria’s President, Goodluck Jonathan, attended talks in France with the leaders of neighboring countries impacted by Boko

Haram. This triggered a process of negotiation that culminated in Nigeria accepting the direct participation of forces from Chad, Cameroon, and Niger in the fight against Boko Haram, including on its own territory.<sup>7</sup> The arrangement—the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF), has resulted in a degree of integration of command structures and substantial, though sporadic, collaboration in operations in the field, with political and practical advisory support provided by the United States, the UK, and France.

But as we shall see in the case of the wider Sahel, while a coordinated and internationalized military effort may produce short-term security gains on the ground, it cannot substitute for the political action and social and economic development that is essential to restoring peace and stability.

### *Peace Process Struggles to Gain Momentum*

Initially, it was hoped that the deployment of 15,000 person-strong MINUSMA and 4,500 person-strong Barkhane, would provide the international support that would enable national security forces and public authorities in Mali, and the wider Sahel region, to re-establish stable conditions.

While jihadist groups continued to stage sporadic terrorist attacks, they did not actually control territory or settlements. Meanwhile, the secular armed groups were engaged in peace negotiations and it was hoped that gathering momentum in the peace process would exert a growing attraction for individuals and factions still engaged in violent terrorism or criminality.

In 2013, in the aftermath of the Franco-African intervention, the influence of the military putschists had gradually faded in Bamako, allowing Mali to restore normal constitutional democracy, with the election of Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, a former prime minister, as head of state. The presidential election was followed by legislative elections. Having been elected with a thumping majority in the runoff ballot, President Keïta entered office with a powerful personal mandate, which he had kept shrewdly vague during the election campaign itself. However, he was slow to deploy his popularity and political capital in the cause of negotiation and compromise in order to consolidate an agreement with the non-jihadist northern armed groups. It took further pressure from Algeria, the mediator for the peace negotiations, and the international

community to finally persuade the Tuareg nationalist alliance, the *Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad* (CMA), to agree to a settlement with the government and other pro-government northern militias in the *Plateforme* alliance. This “Algiers Accord” was finally signed by the government and the *Plateforme* in May 2015, and the CMA signed the following month.

The fundamental basis of the deal was that the armed groups would accept Mali’s territorial integrity, as a united sovereign state, and thus abandon any aspiration to *Azawad* independence. In return, the government would decentralize power and, implicitly, patronage to the regional level, thus allowing the leadership of the Tuareg nationalist groups to maintain their predominance in the north-east. The security context for the deal would be underpinned by a program of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), with some former fighters from the armed groups being brought into the official security forces while others were provided with support to transition into civilian life.

The hope was that as the process advanced, those fighters and notables who continued to dabble in jihadist or criminal activity would be gradually persuaded that the peace process offered them better prospects, in both material and political terms. However, the prospects for successful implementation of the Algiers Accord were heavily contingent on both the government and the armed groups throwing their full weight into the process. This did not happen. Senior former rebels were reluctant to surrender the military influence they enjoyed, especially in and around Kidal; meanwhile, President Keïta, heavily rooted in the politics of Bamako and the south, allowed the process to meander along rather than commit his personal political capital to convince southern voters that it was worth making compromises to ensure the “buy-in” of the one-time northern Tuareg rebels.

### *Momentum Is Lost Before Bamako Finally Moves*

The faltering of the northern peace process, in an ambience of drift even after the Algiers Accord had been signed, meant that there was little pressure on hold-out jihadist or criminal elements to give up armed activity and engage. Indeed, the reverse happened. In a festering atmosphere already low levels of trust on all sides declined further and security conditions worsened, with a steady trickle of jihadist attacks in the north and bloody incidents of urban terrorism in Bamako, Ouagadougou, and

even the coastal resort of Grand Bassam in Côte d'Ivoire. MINUSMA found its resources increasingly consumed in protecting its own troops against jihadist attacks, including through improvised explosive devices, while raids by France's Barkhane force regularly captured or killed jihadist fighters without fundamentally altering the dynamics of the situation. Meanwhile, in central Mali, a fresh jihadist movement appeared, the *Front de Libération du Macina* (FLM), had emerged. The FLM, *Al-Qaeda au Maghreb Islamique* (AQMI), and the Tuareg jihadist group, Ansar Dine, even announced a strategic alliance, the *Groupe de soutien à l'islam et aux musulmans* (GSIM). President Keïta finally reacted to the seriousness of the situation, appointing the experienced Soumeylou Boubeye Maïga, a former foreign and later defense minister, as secretary general of the presidency—de facto chief of staff—in August 2016. A native of Gao, in the north, and well connected in Algiers, Maïga came to the post with an acute understanding of northern issues and the factors that might influence the situation. The result was a decision to re-divide the existing three northern regions—Timbuktu, Kidal, and Gao—into five by carving out two new northern regions, Taoudenit and Ménaka, and to appoint interim authorities to govern all of these, on the grounds that security problems would prevent the holding of elections for some time.

This ingenious move was implemented in late 2016 and early 2017 and marked a concrete step toward the decentralization envisaged in the Algiers Accord as the response to local demands for more autonomy. The government then used its appointments to the new authorities as a political tool to bind northern armed groups into the peace process; in particular, it gave a disproportionate share of key roles to the CMA, the alliance of ex-separatists, effectively buying their adherence to this new model for northern Mali. This aggrieved some smaller moderate factions, but the government saw this as a price worth paying for securing the CMA's support. Maïga, who in December 2017 was promoted to prime minister, also engaged in a political charm offensive, regularly visiting troubled areas of the center and north, to meet with local dignitaries, listen to their complaints, and promise aid. Critics dismissed this as touting for votes, to support Keïta's campaign for re-election in 2018; whatever the motivation, it was a necessary process of engagement—and one that has continued since the election of Maïga's successor as prime minister, Boubou Cissé. Even so, government services are still thin on the ground across much of the north; partly because of security fears, it has proved difficult to persuade public servants to accept

postings to northern towns, and there are areas where the Malian army was still absent at the end of 2019. Efforts to promote reconciliation or even basic dialogue have been fitful and lacking in sustained, high-profile government support.

In central Mali, the FLM was playing on local tensions between Peul pastoralists and Dogon and Bambara farming communities. This worsening local conflict was geographically much closer to Bamako than the north, and in a region regarded by Malians as part of the country's heartland. Yet the nature of the local crisis was not perceived as posing a threat to the country's territorial integrity and cohesion in the way that Tuareg separatism had done. Perhaps for this reason, the developing crisis in the Mopti region, in particular, suffered from a lack of political prioritization—or external mediation—until the situation had almost spiraled out of control and local society had been scarred by deep rifts, fueled by killings on all sides and the abuses of heavy-handed soldiers.

It was only in mid-to late 2019 that serious mediation began to make progress in the central region. The area has never benefitted from the sort of external peacebuilding diplomacy applied to the north with the Algiers negotiating process. Armed groups and those related to them are much less structured in political terms than their northern counterparts, which increases the difficulty of organizing effective peace talks.

On the other hand, precisely because this fissiparous and localized crisis may well have to be resolved through local negotiation and mediation it could foster a gradual peace process that has deeper and more sustainable roots than the Algiers Accord in the north. It has often proved difficult in this region to secure the sustained local adherence of factions or commanders, whatever the headline commitments made by their nominal leaders.

### *G5—A Fresh Regional Military Approach*

However, as the political processes inched forward, it became increasingly clear that this would not be sufficient to restore peace and stability in the Sahel. The scale and the geographical spread of the violence was spiraling out more widely, with jihadist violence spreading across much of northern Burkina Faso and sporadic attacks from Mali into western Niger.

Sahel countries formed the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5) in 2014 to coordinate action to tackle the spreading regional security crisis. The initial priority was to identify development projects that could foster

economic activity and livelihoods in marginalized areas and, thus, reduce the social and economic pressures that might lead some people, particularly young men, to be tempted by the money that jihadist groups and narcotics trafficking gangs could offer. But as security conditions deteriorated, the G5 member states (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) increasingly began to focus on developing a stronger military response, eventually conceiving of the idea of a 5,000-strong joint force to be composed of units of 1,000 troops each reassigned from their existing militaries.

These ideas found willing external partners in the newly-elected French President, Emmanuel Macron, and the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Policy, Federica Mogherini.<sup>8</sup> During mid-late 2017, the concept of a joint force in the Sahel was rapidly refined, while Brussels and Paris worked diplomatic channels to mobilize the funding required to equip the force, culminating in a February 2018 meeting that mobilized more than EU €400 million in pledges.

There were key differences between the proposed G5 force and the ECOWAS proposals for a joint force that had met with such international skepticism back in 2012.

- i. The G5 force would be drawn from the armies of the Sahel countries themselves, and its soldiers would therefore be accustomed to the region's daunting climate and environment.
- ii. All five countries were former French colonies, thus sharing a degree of common background in terms of administrative culture and training cooperation with the French. The five member governments were also accustomed to collaborating in other policy areas, notably food security and the monitoring of drought risk.
- iii. The mission conceived for the force was relatively narrow and thus realistic: it would focus on border regions and would be mandated with hot pursuit rights permitting its units to cross national frontiers in search of jihadist groups and trafficking gangs.
- iv. Being local troops, the G5 soldiers would be best suited to operating in these relatively more populated regions of the Sahel, where they could perhaps relate to local communities more easily than the French troops of the Barkhane force, who would provide support but otherwise focus substantially on fighting the jihadist groups in more thinly populated northern desert regions.

However, it soon became apparent that even this rather realistic initiative for joint action would have to overcome serious hurdles. Initial training exercises showed that despite some shared background, over the years the national armies had developed differences. A first exercise showed that their secure military radio systems were varied and they could not communicate with each other, forcing the troops to rely on their insecure personal mobile phones to communicate with units from other countries.

The “G5 Sahel had been set up with only a small secretariat, in Nouakchott, that was ill-equipped to handle large budgets or military procurement.”<sup>9</sup> Many financial contributors were slow to pay the money they had promised. In early January 2020, almost two years after originally pledging EU €100 million for the force, Sahel presidents stated that the money had not been received, while the United Arab Emirates had paid only EU €10 million of a promised EU €30 million. This has held up the purchase of essential equipment.

The G5 force did make some progress in deployment and operational autonomy. Moreover, during 2019, France’s Barkhane force began to reshape its operations. In more southerly populated areas, the emphasis was increasingly on “hearts and minds” and the provision of basic services, particularly health care, as insecurity had led local doctors to flee. The task of actively seeking out and fighting jihadist combat units was to be left largely to special forces. However, the phased implementation of the G5 plan and the reshaping of Barkhane’s activity proved inadequate to the challenge.

### *Crisis Forces a Deeper Rethink*

During the course of 2019 and early 2020, the central Sahel experienced a dramatic acceleration of violence. National security forces repeatedly suffered heavy loss of life in a series of large jihadist attacks, particularly in the “three frontiers region” where the borders of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso converge. At the same time, attacks spread south across large areas of Burkina Faso, this time with civilians frequently targeted. In a country once renowned for the quality of its grassroots development thinking and basic social services, the state’s public service coverage was now shrinking in the face of the spreading violence; more than 1,000 schools had closed by late 2019.

Even before the wave of attacks had reached their highest intensity from September 2019 onwards, it was becoming clear that a much more

profound rethink would be needed if the situation was to be stabilized and the Sahel was to get back on a course of gradual progress toward peaceful normality and a renewed focus on economic and social development. At the G7 summit in August 2019, France's President Macron and German Chancellor, Angela Merkel met with the current chair of the G5 Sahel, Burkina Faso's President, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. They announced a process of review by African governments, Paris, and Berlin to culminate around the end of the year. The challenges facing governments were numerous.

The spread of violence southward across much of Burkina Faso and into the Niger River valley in western Niger raised concern that militants might begin to infiltrate the north of coastal West African countries.

Ghana, through the Accra Initiative, had begun to coordinate an enhanced border security effort by coastal countries, working with the Burkina authorities,<sup>10</sup> but a more strategic approach was needed. There was also deep concern, among both African governments and key international partners, that the Malian government and political class were still not making a sufficiently serious effort to fully implement the Algiers Agreement.<sup>11</sup> For example, the main opposition party was still boycotting the national dialogue launched by President Keïta, while Keïta's own government was accused of procrastinating over the restoration of public services to Kidal because the town was in the hands of the CMA, the former Tuareg separatist movement. Yet, the failure to restore effective services risked fueling local disenchantment and instability. The armed groups had begun to engage with DDR, but sought to extract extra revenue from the process by inflating the number of fighters they had who might qualify for it.

Meanwhile, it was clear that even the reshaped and strengthened partnership between G5 forces and Barkhane was failing to secure decisive military progress against armed groups. Indeed, the number of attacks was rising and they were becoming more violent. In central Mali, progress toward community mediation and dialogue was fitful and, in some areas, the localized violence persisted, while across the border in Burkina Faso an ever-growing number of areas were suffering attacks on civilians. Areas that had been secure in 2018 were now highly insecure.

The G7 discussions were followed by an ECOWAS summit in Ouagadougou in September 2019, to which the leaderships of Mauritania and Chad—Sahel countries but not members of the bloc—were also invited. It was resolved that ECOWAS would assume the political lead in the response to the crisis, in order to ensure a more comprehensive, all-region approach. President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger warned that

it was important not to neglect the contribution of the G5, notably, its joint military force, but there was a recognition that strategy needed to be coordinated beyond just this group of five countries.

Subsequent months saw the violence reach a new peak of intensity, with attacks on Malian army bases at Bouklikessi and Indélimane and Nigérien bases at Inatès and Chinagoder claiming the lives of hundreds of troops. *Etat Islamique au Grand Sahara* (EIGS), the local affiliate of Daesh, claimed responsibility for most of these attacks. After 13 French troops died in a helicopter crash in November 2019, while on operations against the group, Macron pressed for summit talks with his G5 counterparts. Niger began to press for a major international effort to tackle the group, similar to the coalition launched against Daesh/ISIS in Syria and Iraq. In December 2019, ECOWAS leaders met once more and then G5 leaders and Macron held their summit on January 13, 2020, in Pau, France. By this stage, the review process launched back in August 2019 had been largely completed and the leaders attending the summit were therefore able to set out a new approach which marked a clear shift in strategy.

### *A Way Forward—Questions and Challenges*

The leaders announced<sup>12</sup> that the priority focus of their military operations would be the campaign against EIGS in the three frontiers region. Moreover, Sahelian and French forces would operate under a single command; an immediate, additional 220 French troops would be sent to the area. Furthermore, during the course of 2020, the campaign would be joined by special forces units from several other European countries (besides France)—an initiative labeled Operation Takuba. This would mark a further stage in the internationalization of the campaign to restore stability to the Sahel. Ever since January 2013, other European countries had provided logistical support for French troops, particularly helicopters, but these were not combat units. Now, it was agreed that for the first time, combat forces would be assigned to support the French.

The aim of this revised approach was to bring about a decisive shift in the direction of travel to massively reduce the threat posed by EIGS. But the implication was that in other zones, beyond the three frontiers area, politics, mediation, and local security negotiations would have to assume a much larger share of the peacebuilding burden. An initial positive example had already come with an agreement between the CMA and the *Plate-forme* militia groupings over security in Ménaka, in the far east of Mali.

But the Pau summit also applied public pressure on the Malian government and political class to advance the wider process of dialogue. The importance of development efforts was also reasserted, which would mean a practical effort to start implementing a set of projects drawn up by the G5 and for which funding had been pledged at a meeting in Nouakchott in late 2018. But development and public service provision are contingent on an essential level of security. Restoring peace to the Sahel will, therefore, remain a difficult and uncertain task.

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The effort to manage security threats and restore peace and stability in the Sahel evolved substantially over the last ten years prior to 2020. While international partners have always been involved in the development effort, security and military engagement has moved from being an essentially national affair to one that is highly internationalized. But this has been mostly a gradual process with the exception of the Franco-African emergency intervention in Mali in January 2013. And key decisions have been, essentially, driven by assessments of the conditions on the ground, and taken in partnership between the countries of the region and their African and international partners.

Within the measure of what is practical, the process of crisis management has taken account of the political and social complexities of the Sahel. All participants are aware that progress is likely to be gradual, at best. This will remain a work in progress for the foreseeable future. Moreover, the security crisis is being tackled against the Sahel's varied, and often challenging, national contexts—and a sharp reminder of this reality came in Mali on 18 August 2020 when, after weeks of mass protest over corruption and electoral manipulation, the military took power and forced President Keïta to resign. The soldiers rushed to reassure international security partners of their continued cooperation, but then embarked on tortuous negotiations with political groups, civil society and ECOWAS over the shape and duration of a transition to new polls and a promised fresh start.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Establish a clear roadmap for the urgent restoration of public services.* In areas of the Sahel where insecurity is most acute, the violence—and fear of violence—has led to the retreat of essential public services: schools, health centers, basic development programs, policing, and justice. This only fuels the deprivation that can

contribute to instability. The security threat is intense and it is hard to manage or contain the risks faced by public service personnel. But, there is an urgent need for a carefully planned step-by-step restoration of key services, albeit shielded by additional security measures. This will be extremely difficult, and not without risks. But, it is essential to provide better services for local populations in insecure areas and begin to re-establish the foundations for economic activity and revived livelihoods, and, vitally, to slowly rebuild trust in state institutions and foster decentralized, accountable institutions of local administration.

2. *Provide long-term, permanent funding to the G5 force.* The development of the G5 joint military force, and procurement of its equipment, has been hampered by uncertainty over when some funding pledges might be honored. Rather than wait for this money to arrive, it would be better to establish a permanent funding arrangement, with agreed ongoing contributions—both from G5 and other West African states themselves and from international partners. This would allow the more consistent forward planning of force operations and procurement that will be essential if the revised military strategy is to be sustained and effective over the medium term. Such consistency will also make it easier for France and other European governments to sustain their own engagement in partnership with the force.
3. *Create a West African community mediation entity.* Community-level disputes over land, water, grazing rights, decentralization, and past acts of violence enhance the tensions that contribute to instability and violence. There could be a valuable role for a politically neutral and independent regional body. It would not act as an arbiter or compete with the prerogatives of sovereign states. But, it could act as a facilitator, acting in public to promote dialogue and dispute resolution through compromise and, perhaps, also acting in private as a channel of communication between parties that are reluctant to be seen publicly making contact. For example, if an armed group wishes to discuss terms for renouncing violence. Such a body could be formally attached to ECOWAS, or ECOWAS and the G5 together, to assure it of recognized status. But it would be firmly non-governmental, with a small staff and a presiding board of senior civil society figures, former politicians, and academic, religious, and legal figures.

## NOTES

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## CHAPTER 23

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# Conclusion

*Terence McNamee and Monde Muyangwa*

The challenge of how to rebuild society following conflict has not become easier over time. On the face of it, this might seem surprising since peacebuilding has been near the top of the global agenda for a quarter of a century. Money spent on peacebuilding activities—from conflict prevention, to conflict management, to post-conflict reconstruction—by the UN, member states, and countless organizations worldwide has grown year after year. Decision-makers and practitioners can now access a vast literature on peacebuilding policy and experiences, including case studies, lessons learned, and best practices. The reasons why societies relapse into conflict are well known. So why is it still so difficult to prevent it from happening?

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The 2011 World Development Report (WDR) found that 90 percent of civil wars since 2000 occurred in countries that had experienced a civil war in the previous thirty years.<sup>1</sup> Ten years on from the WDR report, the challenge of peacebuilding is less associated with a return to all-out-war—though it still happens, as South Sudan sadly illustrates—than outbreaks of violence and lingering instability and fragility. In other words, a failure to overcome inertia and put peace on a sustainable footing.

Part of the reason is the sheer complexity of the task at hand. There are no easily transferable templates for peacebuilding. And nothing is ever linear. The strategic, operational, and policy environments in which peacebuilding occurs comprise a mosaic of different actors. The issues at stake are rarely straightforward, but instead interconnect with local, national, and international interests, which are almost never in sync. Even in post-conflict states where tangible progress is evident—such as Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and Mozambique, to name only a few of the countries examined in this volume—the metrics to determine when a peacebuilding effort has been successful are not always clear or reliable. This ambivalence is alternatively expressed in the peacebuilding literature in terms of “positive peace” and “negative peace.” The latter entails a return to stability, which permits people to get on with their lives and allows society to recover from war. But the underlying causes of conflict are not addressed, potentially storing up trouble for the future. Positive peace, on the other hand, requires societies to undertake fundamental changes that increase their resilience and enable them to address differences and conflicts without violence. Often the perspectives of governments and elites—that is, those responsible for signing and implementing peace agreements—differ from locals and communities, especially in the peripheries. It is here that unresolved tensions can simmer beneath the surface for years before igniting once again.

If there is an endpoint to peacebuilding, rarely is there consensus on what it looks like. Broadly speaking, there is agreement that peacebuilding is a long-term process, which involves changes in attitudes, behaviors, and norms. An end to the process requires, at a minimum, the restoration of public safety and people being able to live without fear or threat of violence. If there is a widely held view in society that its “security” problem(s) has been converted into a “political” problem(s) that, too, might constitute an endpoint in people’s minds.

There is less consensus on other signifiers of peace. Equal rights for all—regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and

so on—would be an important barometer of peace in many countries, but not all. Similarly, the ability of all citizens to participate equally in holding government accountable and contributing to political life would be deemed essential in some but not others.

This contestation is especially pronounced in Africa. Colonialism bequeathed Africa's newly independent states countless triggers for disunity—contested lands, fragmented ethnic groups, and ungoverned territories. The integration of different peoples into a single nation did not develop organically from their shared foundational experiences—decolonization and liberation—as many had assumed. Without the social underpinning to the new political dispensation, building common values and constructing a robust national identity has been a very slow work-in-progress for many African states. Consequently, and notwithstanding the failings of some of its leaders, Africa's first post-independence generation was not exactly primed for peace and democracy.

Yet since the end of the Cold War, the Western liberal ideal has been the main lens through which peacebuilding in Africa is understood. Peacebuilding interventions tend to be defined and assessed—by donors, the UN, Western governments, if not African governments themselves—on that basis. The result, some scholars have argued, is a concept or idea of peace that does not always accord with African realities or values.

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The nearly two-dozen chapters in this book affirm that more work needs to be done in three common areas of concern in peacebuilding worldwide.

The first—understanding the context—is no less important for being restated time and again. Unless you get to the root causes of a conflict—why people fought in the first place—then whatever tools and interventions are tried, they will not secure peace in the long term and probably not in the short to medium term either. This is not a simple research task. Identifying the complex relationships of power and competition in any state—say between rival leaders, ethnic groups, or different regions—and how they have evolved over decades or even centuries takes time. International actors are not known for taking their time in peacebuilding contexts; more often, they are accused of rushing in before grasping the true nature of a conflict they are meant to help resolve. And far too often, there appears to be a tendency to focus on the symptoms of conflict and

insecurity, while not investing enough or for the long term, in addressing the root causes and drivers of conflict, and amplifying the facilitators for peace.

The second is local agency, ownership, and leadership. Without accountability to governments and people within the conflict-affected country, peacebuilding will fail. External actors can be helpful at the margins but rarely are they the drivers of change. Yet, as several chapters in this book have illustrated, too often external approaches and priorities on critical issues such as peace and justice, DDR, and the role of the state are at tension with those of the local community. As Israeli scholar Asher Susser once wrote of foreign mediation in the Middle East, “all those involved should make it their business to study the limitations, constraints, desires, aspirations and red lines of the players and make their best effort to help them get to where they would like to go.”<sup>2</sup> Historically, peacebuilding in Africa has been too often beholden to the interests and timelines of outsiders, who provide the lion’s share of funding support and also possess the technical expertise to implement programs, which locals may lack or be perceived to lack. Peace cannot take root if the agency of local communities (including what peace means to them and how it manifests) is not respected or they are not empowered to own peacebuilding.

The third is collaboration, particularly vital in the search for the more elusive “positive peace.” In some cases, this entails local, national, regional, and international actors all working together. In others, the most critical forms of cooperation are between civil society organizations, governments, regional bodies, and the private sector. Collaboration can take the form of sharing information and analysis; deciding on planning and assessment tools; building electoral frameworks or active citizenship initiatives; improving justice systems; introducing peace education in curricula and across society; and creating a more inclusive economy that gives people meaningful livelihood options.

Complementing these general observations on peacebuilding, some recommendations put forward by the various contributors to this book—aimed at both policymakers and practitioners—bear repeating. Some are notable for how frequently they arise, in one form or another, in ostensibly very different peacebuilding environments; others are specific to their context.

Concerns over funding fall into the former category. Although funding for peacebuilding has risen significantly since the end of the Cold War, it

pales in comparison to the economic cost of violence worldwide—estimated to exceed US \$14 trillion per annum or 12.6 percent of global GDP, according to the World Humanitarian Data and Trends report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).<sup>3</sup> Given these staggering numbers, it makes economic sense to invest more in peacebuilding—but which areas promise the greatest return? And to whom should funds be directed to best deliver that effect in Africa?

One constant that runs through the thematic chapters in this book—from DDR, early warning systems and elections through to regional and continental mediation and post-conflict reconstruction efforts—is the mismatch between the pan-African ideal of self-reliance and the heavy dependency on external (non-African) funding. This renders key national and local initiatives vulnerable. The African Union (AU)'s capacity and resource constraints are a strong brake on its bold ambitions across the range of peacebuilding activities, not least in peacekeeping. But as Paul Williams argues, while the UN system of financing its peace operations functions relatively well, there is no comparably effective system for African-led missions, which have struggled to find adequate funding. The failure of many AU member states to adequately finance their regular budgets amplifies the need for external support. An African proverb—“Borrowed waters do not quench one’s thirst”—has been invoked by one scholar in decrying his continent’s reliance on former colonial powers and other external forces.<sup>4</sup>

As Paul Melly observes, the regional nature of conflicts in the Sahel, the Horn, and the Great Lakes regions all point to the necessity of investing in conflict prevention and early warning systems. Yet as the chapter on the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding cautions, international donors are the only reliable source of funds for it to continue its early warning programs, and their funds are typically short-term and limited in scope, and tied to results that are expected within unrealistic timeframes. Similarly, DDR programs have in the past relied heavily on the World Bank and other donors—but their support has rarely been as adequate, timely, and predictable as was required, especially, as Anatole Ayissi suggests, for the “reintegration” component, which remains the Achilles heel of DDR programs.

Solutions to the funding dilemma are not readily apparent. The local private sector could and should be more engaged in peacebuilding in Africa. But, thus far, they have not been key players.

Another major theme is that of overloaded mandates for peacebuilding, particularly peace support operations. In many cases, peace support operations are given a laundry list of tasks, often without the requisite resources including finances, personnel, and equipment. As a result, the desired peace outcomes are unattainable.

Along with conflict that it has endured, Africa has also witnessed some successes and progress in peacebuilding in Africa. This book has sought to highlight and draw key lessons from some of those experiences. Sierra Leone's success is compellingly described by Adekeye Adebajo in this book as something of a mystery—the post-conflict country that contains all the ingredients for a relapse into war, yet for nearly twenty years and counting it has been largely peaceful. Adebajo attributes this success to many factors, but warns that, like a beaten-up car, Sierra Leone remains fragile and in constant danger of breakdown, requiring frequent care, resourceful innovation, commitment and close attention in order to keep it running. In some ways, this description speaks for all African countries emerging from conflict. We hope that the lessons and policy recommendations offered in this book can help fragile and conflict-affected African countries find the road to peace and keep on it into the future.

## NOTES

1. See <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/4389>.
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4. Siphamandla Zondi, "African Union Approaches to Peacebuilding: Efforts at Shifting the Continent towards Decolonial Peace," AJCR 2017/1, <https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/african-union-approaches-peacebuilding/>.

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