

Africa's Wars, Woes And The Elusive Peace : Strategic Options To Peace Building

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ABSTRACT

Africa has been rated as having the largest number of armed conflicts with about 15 countries having been homes of armed conflicts in the recent past. Building lasting peace in some of the war torn countries has been a daunting challenge for global, regional and national peace building initiatives. Regrettably, there is no peace anywhere in sight in a number of states despite the fact that, almost half of the 51 United Nations States Peace Keeping missions have been deployed to Africa. Although there are nations that have emerged painfully from the devastating conflicts, some have slid back into violence eroding the minimal peace gains realized. Again, despite the increase in democratic regimes, contested elections have in some places resulted in violence and chaos derailing the very process of democracy. Anarchy in one country more often than not has spill effects in neighboring countries. Most warring African states have to grapple with problems of proliferation of small arms and light weapons which are easily and cheaply available due to porous borders; lack of controls and stringent legislation as well as religious and ethnic intolerance. Worse still, there are states that have fueled conflicts in their own countries and facilitated the plunder of their own resources by making payments for arms in kind through mining concessions and allowing access to significant natural resources. Arms embargoes have proved futile in cases where states have discovered the trick of 'triangulation.' This paper catalogues the recurrent conflicts in some pockets of Africa and why peace remains a mirage in these countries. It also examines the fresh outbreaks of violence and highlights factors militating against peace building efforts. This paper advocates for strategic peace building which has a stakeholder involvement approach that can guarantee sustained peace.

Keywords: Woes, Elusive, Strategic, Peace Building, Proliferation, Triangulation, Militating, Mirage And Plunder.

I. INTRODUCTION

During the last three decades, the history of Africa especially Sub-Saharan Africa has been filled with armed conflicts (Africa Sun News, 2013; Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2000; Suliman, 2005). Among the most notable were the wars that tore apart Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Ivory Coast and Somalia (Ndiku, 2011). It has further been reported that, at the base of these wars were the rich resources each of the poor countries held of timber, oil or diamonds. The wars served the purpose of distraction as the countries and their displaced citizens were robbed of their countries' natural resources, easily converted to cash, for personal use and fortunes of ruling parties. Africa's dependence on

natural resource exports which are easy to loot by rebels precipitates protracted conflicts. This was the case with looting of diamonds in Liberia, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Mulu, 2008).

Another problem is that of easy availability of arms. There are 650 million guns in circulation worldwide, one for every 10 people or put another way, there were small arms and ammunition enough to shoot every man, woman and child on the planet twice (McCullum, 2007). Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are the most commonly used weapons in violent conflicts in all African Regions in East and Southern Africa as well as the West and Central regions. Easy availability of arms in Africa increases the incidence and impact of armed violence, triggers conflict and provokes local armed struggles into full scale wars once they break out

(Schroeder & Lamb, 2006). The Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, various Somali factions and post-election violence in Kenya were incited by the presence of illegally trafficked small arms and light weapons. Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is opaque, amorphous and dynamic.

Nations and manufacturers are eager to dispose of arsenals of arms made superfluous by the post-cold war political developments and technological innovation also continue to view Africa as an attractive market. African leaders have also acknowledged that, their porous borders and ineffective national legal codes governing firearms commerce also contribute to the continent's vulnerability to opportunistic arms merchants. It has also been reported that, in some countries, AK 47 rifles can be bought on the open market for as little as the price of a sack of flour or chicken. The AK 47 assault rifle is the gun of choice in all Africa's conflicts and is on sale in many places for less than US\$ 30. In countries like Sudan, Somalia and the DR Congo, guns are part of the culture and almost everyone carries a personal weapon (McCullum, 2007). Arms transfers and trafficking have continued to spiral partly because the international community has not effectively enforced UN sanctions, criminalized embargo violations, or penalized financial institutions that act as conduits for weapons purchases. The international community's inability to control arms transfers and trafficking contribute to the persistence on these conflicts. Since 2000, UN investigations have documented weapons transfers by neighbouring governments to insurgent groups in Somalia, DR Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan all of which were under UN arms embargoes at the time of the transfers.

II. METHODS AND MATERIAL

Pockets of war in Africa

Although most African countries have had armed conflicts, this paper focuses on three regions where total peace is still quite elusive despite concerted international efforts. These are: Somalia, Sudan /south Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The Wars

The civil war in Somalia began in 1991 when a coalition of clan-based armed opposition groups ousted the

nation's long standing military government of Siad Barre in an effort to facilitate a general shift towards a nationalistic agenda (Hansen, 2003). It is indeed ironical that although all Somalis are Muslim and share the same language and culture, the country has witnessed the one of the most terrible wars in Africa for more than two decades (Elmi & Barise, 2010). The current war in Somalia has been attributed to competition for resources and power, military repression, misuse of clan identity, availability of weapons and the large number of unemployed youth. The crisis in Somalia is a culmination of a series of developments from the time national reconciliation talks produced an agreement on the Transitional Federal Government. The Transitional Federal Government assisted by Ethiopian troops assumed control of the nation's Southern conflict zones from the newly formed Islamic Courts Union (ICU) but the ICU subsequently splintered into more radical groups notably the Al-Shabaab which has been fighting the Somali government for the control of the region.

In Sudan, the civil war began in 1983, lasted 22 years and ended in 2005. However, six years after the initial implementation of the **Comprehensive Peace Agreement** (CPA) that aimed to put an end to more than 20 years of conflict, Sudan continues to face serious challenges (UNICEF, 2013). The war restarted because key provisions of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), in particular the promised popular consultations to address long-held grievances, were not implemented. On 9 July 2011 Sudan split in two creating the world's newest nation – the Republic of South Sudan. However, peace is not yet guaranteed. As the South gains statehood, crucial issues such as border demarcation, sharing of debt, and oil revenues and the use of the North's pipeline remain unresolved.

The history of DRC has been one of civil war and corruption. Generally, DRC is a very wealthy country known for its diamonds, gold, copper, cobalt and zinc. The country also has supplies of coltan, which is used in mobile phones and other electronic gadgets, and cassiterite, used in food packaging. The Second Congo War (also known as the Great War of Africa) began in August 1998, little more than a year after the First Congo War and involving some of the same issues, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and officially ended in July 2003 when the Transitional Government

of the Democratic Republic of the Congo took power. Despite a peace deal and the formation of a transitional government in 2003, people in the East of the country remain in terror of marauding militias and the army. The war has an economic as well as a political side. Fighting has been fuelled by the country's vast mineral wealth, with all sides taking advantage of the anarchy to plunder natural resources.

The Woes

In Somalia, by 2009, there were 1.3 million internally displaced persons and 3.5 million people in need of emergency aid (Menkhaus, 2009). The displaced lacked access to food, clean water, basic health care and support networks. In addition, food prices sky rocketed due to the global spike in the cost of grains and fuel, chronic insecurity and crime and the counterfeiting of the Somali shilling by politicians and business people. Secondly, Kenya, which should have been on a clearly peace enhancing mission turned partisan, supporting Ras Kamboni's independence in order to create a buffer zone. This precipitated tension between Kenya and Somalia (Muhumed, 2013). Again, the Al Shabaab militias have directed their threats to the aid workers in Somalia. Following unprecedented insecurity in Somalia, the Medecins Sans Frontiers has withdrawn its medical services. In London, Barclays bank announced that, it would stop offering banking services to Somali remittance agencies. This decision would cut off the main legal means to transfer money from the United Kingdom to Somalia (Allison, 2013).

In Sudan, many Sudanese have never returned home since the peace treaty in 2005. Some of them no longer speak the local dialect of the area they came from as, being orphans, there were no family members to keep the languages alive. Their fear is that, not speaking the local dialect will make finding employment difficult. In the North, the UN estimates that the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region has seen some 300,000 people displaced so far in 2013 - twice as many as in 2011 and 2012. Many of those affected by the conflict are unable to receive any humanitarian assistance as insecurity has hampered efforts by aid workers to reach them. In total, 3.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Darfur. To make matters worse, the Sudanese government expelled at least four humanitarian aid

groups, including Save the Children and Medecins Sans Frontiers (Doctors Without Borders), accusing them of subversive behaviour.

In DRC, the war has been called possibly the worst emergency to unfold in Africa in recent decades. It has killed 5.4 million people, mostly from disease and starvation (Reuters, 2008; International Rescue Committee, 2010) making the Second Congo War the deadliest conflict worldwide since World War II (Joe, 2007). Millions more were displaced from their homes or sought asylum in neighbouring countries. International Alert (2010) reports that, widespread sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in eastern DRC has received much attention internationally and nationally (from civil society groups) in recent years. According to Rosen (2013), in DRC there are many soldiers, but no state; over 19,000 UN peacekeepers, but no peace to keep; countless armies and militias groups, but no single, unified reason for their existence. Apart from the social ills, the education sector long crumpled. It is reported that, the DRC had only 30 native-born university graduates when the Belgians left. The status of education in one town: Rubaya, epitomizes the rest of the country. There are only five secondary schools in town, and they are all run by religious organizations. Remuneration is poor and teachers keep leaving to work in mines which offer better returns. Similarly, when the children are unable to pay their school fees, they go work in the mines as well (Rosen, 2013).

Factors militating against peace

So far, it has been reported that fourteen peace conferences have been held in different cities at different times to bring peace to Somalia but most of them had failed. Downs and Stedman cited in Elmi and Barise (2010) have indicated that, a number of factors affect the implementation of peace accords. They include the number of warring parties, a coerced agreement, the likelihood of spoilers, a collapsed state, hostile neighbouring states or networks and demand for secession. To this end, Ethiopia has been blamed for perpetuating the Somali conflict by sending weapons over the border, supporting faction leaders militarily and sometimes occupying several towns in Southern Somalia (ibid). It is also alleged that, with respect to the conference in Kenya, Ethiopia initiated this peace

process and controlled it for two years with the help of Kenya, and together they produced a charter, a parliament and a government of their design. Foreign forces have also been blamed for committing grave abuses in south-central Somalia, including indiscriminate shelling.

Another factor militating against peace is the availability of SALW to internationally embargoed areas like Somalia. Somalia was put under US embargo in 2004 but the government of Djibouti continued to furnish the Islamic Court Union, an opposition group, with arms. A report by Amnesty International 2010 suggested that, unregulated arm supply to the Transitional Federal Government in Somalia found their way into the hands of the militant fighters-Al-Shabaab. The report accused Uganda, Ethiopia and Yemen of supplying the TFG outside the UN regulatory regime which imposed embargo on Somalia. Seemingly, years after its existence, TFG has no capacity to govern and almost no functional civil service. This explains why Al-Shabaab maintains restrictions on humanitarian assistance and prohibits more than 16 humanitarian organizations.

There is also very easy conscription of fighters by warring factions as well as the government. Another characteristic of the conflicts in Africa is the presence of child soldiers. These are evident in the conflicts in Congo and Sudan and (Mulu, 2008; Boutes *et. al.*, 2005; Adebajo, 2002). According to the World Report (2013), all of the Somali parties to the conflict have continued to commit serious abuses against children, including recruiting children into their forces.

The high rate of poverty, youth unemployment and illiteracy are other factors militating against peace efforts in Somalia. The availability of young men who are poorly educated and unemployed, who on the event of a conflict have nothing to lose and they are quickly recruited to participate in the violent conflict some with the hope that they may grow rich through looting or that the new regime will create jobs for them. According to survey conducted to prepare the 2012 Somalia Human Development Report, the unemployment rate of youth aged 14-29 was 67 per cent- one of the highest in the world. About 21 per cent of the youth were neither working nor in school (UNDP, 2012).

As for Sudan, the causes of the conflict are embedded in the history of the country since the pre-colonial period through the post-colonial era. The differences in development between the north and the south are generally the root causes of the protracted civil war in Sudan. The wish to control natural resources of oil and minerals fueled the second spate of violent conflict in Sudan. Discovery of oil in the south made president Numeiry try to redraw the boundaries for the provinces to enable the north access the oil unhindered (Mulu, 2008). This led to the emergence of the SPLM/A under the leadership of John Gerang and the conflict resumed in 1983. Conflict persisted till 2005 when the Intergovernmental Authority and Development mediated peace. The conflict in Sudan is not simply a North-South issue, but aspects where crisis of governance and exclusion of the diverse peoples of Sudan in determining their own development is pronounced (Stewart, 2002). Despite a lengthy peace process, negotiations have so far failed to resolve some key issues. Both states are heavily dependent on oil revenues, and the division of oil wealth is still under discussion. Tension has been frequent over the production and transport of oil. Three-quarters of oil is in South Sudan, but all the infrastructure to export it (pipelines, refineries and Red Sea port) is in the North. In what smacks of exploitation, the North has been charging well above average market prices for the use of its pipeline to Port Sudan, and withholding shipments until payments are made by the Southern government, attracting accusations of attempting to 'sabotage the South's economy.' The demarcation of the 2,000 kilometre north-south border is another contentious issue. In 2012, both sides agreed to form a demilitarized buffer zone, to be monitored by joint border security teams.

For the conflict within the North, the major source of conflict is Darfur. This problem was exacerbated by varying ideas about land ownership, and the abolishment of local councils who would traditionally deal with such conflict leaving no peaceful mechanisms for solving conflicts. Numerous peace processes to end the conflict between the government of Sudan and the various armed groups operating in Darfur have not borne much fruit. Signed between the Sudanese government and armed groups, they have generally been dogged by a lack of legitimacy and deemed not inclusive enough. The second challenge concerns poor implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) and a lack

of inclusivity. Promised funds from both the government of Sudan and donors have been slow to arrive, which has further delayed the activities of the Darfur Regional Authority (DRA), established in December 2011 as the lead actor for the implementation of the agreement. The third challenge to the formal peace process is the significant deterioration in security across Darfur in 2013, as local peace mechanisms struggle to contain inter-communal violence, exacerbated by government actions (IRIN, 2013).

In the South, there are significant problems of violence, as factions which have split off from the SPLM/A, or were in opposition to the party prior to it taking power are responsible for violent disruptions in a number of Southern states. Cattle rustling and local conflicts within the state continue to be a source of violence too, fuelled by the proliferation of small arms and lack of strong policing or law enforcement measures. The SPLM itself as a party is facing political fractures along political and leadership lines within further complicating efforts towards strong and effective governance (Peace Direct, 2011).

In DRC, the 2011 elections were hastily and chaotically organized leading to some protests. The lack of credibility of these elections weakens the internal and external political legitimacy of the government and does not bring DRC any closer to the construction of a positive relationship between the people and the national institutions that are supposed to represent them. There can be no sustained peace with feelings of a botched election. Therefore, faced with such an erosion of legitimacy, civilians, civil society and the opposition parties are exposed to an even greater risk of abuse of power. Agencies' standard post-conflict interventions are simply not working. Responsibility for these failures lies not only with agencies themselves, but also with the Congolese government, which has come to deliberately prefer a technical rather than a political conversation with its international partners. In an effort to assert its sovereignty since securing legitimacy at the polls, the government is increasingly reluctant to offer international partners any opportunity to influence the International Alert country's policy agenda, least of all governance reforms.

The presence of uncontrolled armed groups produces persistent insecurity. Since 2003, progress has been slow in reforming the Congolese army, the police and the justice system (Hoebeke, & Vlassenroot, 2009). The peace process and efforts of demobilisation and reintegration have not reduced the number of armed groups, who had emerged during the war in Congo. The Amani peace process, launched at the beginning of 2008 in Goma, aimed to define the necessary requirements for an inclusive peace, including notably the demobilisation of Kivu militias. However, absence of progress in the DRC process and further difficulties in integrating former rebel commanders into the Congolese army command chain, resulted in renewed mobilisation of militias, and at the end of 2010, the revival of militias that had been 'dormant.'

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Strategic Options to Peace Building

Peace building has assumed a significant place on the international agenda since the end the cold war (Adebayo & Peterson, 2009). Peace building is the development of constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national and racial boundaries. It aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the structural conditions that generate daily conflict. Peace building becomes strategic when it works over the long run and at all levels of society to establish and sustain relationships among people locally and globally. Strategic peace building connects people and groups on the ground with policy makers and power brokers. It aims at resolving conflicts as well as building societies, institutions, policies and relationships that are better to sustain peace and justice.

For the case of Somalia, this paper advocates for the establishment of a clear framework for political transition to prevent TFG and Jubaland from relapsing into conflict. This means decentralization should be carefully addressed by the government, civic leaders, peace keepers and the leaders of the independent state so that everybody understands their role and scope of operation during the duration in "independence." This strategy is premised on the temporary grounds upon which independence was granted.

There is need to build an all-inclusive political process that facilitates exchange between the TFG, peace keeping forces and civilians who are always on receiving end of the conflict. An assessment of grievances leveled against Kenya and other peace keepers should be carried out by an independent party in consultation with civilians and civic leaders. The key issues should be addressed in ways that satisfactorily respond to them in order to defuse tension. Where and whenever peace is restored, peace keepers should ensure a smooth transition and hand over process and cease occupying the area.

The UN and AU should support TFG so that it is made accountable and responsive to the needs of the citizens. TFG should facilitate and guarantee humanitarian assistance to civilians in Al Shabaab stronghold areas. TFG, the Kenya Defense Force, the AU and the UN for should come up with mechanisms that make it impossible for Al-Shabaab to recruit new members. Young people should be involved in planning for their future. A strategy that targets youth for civic education about their rights, values to uphold and alternative engagement activities should be developed for the youth. Peace education and community review are strategies used widely in many places. Peace education refers to programmes meant to promote peace in society through instituting learning processes and training. Though long, peace education is a formidable strategy targeting school children and the youth (ACTION, 2003; Mussanzi, 2001).

The UN, AU, peace keepers, religious and civic leaders should preach the message of non-violent contesting of power. There should be strict monitoring of arms movement to embargoed states. Stringent laws should be instituted against countries that triangulate arms to embargoed states. Individual suppliers of arms should have their trade licenses revoked.

As for Sudan and South Sudan, both states should work on an agreeable formula on oil transportation and the charges levied should not be punitive or exploitative. This could be achieved by increasing the capacity to identify opportunities for constructive policy change, initiate an economic platform that will lead to long term policy implications fair to both states so that oil transportation

and accruing proceeds are not a constant source of tension and potential outbreak of violence. Oil should be a uniting economic factor used to expand the economies of both states in order to create employment opportunities. Border demarcation should be hastened and overseen by independent observers.

Influencing and lobbying is another form of strategic option that can be used in Sudan. It includes raising awareness on the issues at different levels, lobbying specific individuals, organizations and governments on the issue, drawing others into mobilizing for a broad based campaign. People influence things in the way they talk, the way they stand and the way they interact in groups. If it is done consciously, it can bring about change (ACTION, 2003). Global networking and advocacy which involves communication and sharing of information is another conflict transformation strategy which involves communicating with other through various channels (*ibid*). Instead of engaging with SRF components, including the SPLM-N, individually, international actors, especially the UN Security Council, AU Peace and Security Council and Council of the League of Arab States, should engage with them as a whole and encourage their attempts to present a common political position on the future of Sudan (Africa Report No 198, 2013). Again, the government should negotiate with SPL-N leaders and make see the logic of allowing humanitarian assistance to reach civilians. Robust efforts to improve evidence-based monitoring and analysis of the evolving security situation by international actors should be initiated and amplified. In turn, this would inform better definition of problems and solutions, moving away from the shared fictions and confusion of the recent period.

The land problem must be solved by an inclusive approach. Strategic connections through integration of land beneficiaries, the alienated and the civil society in a plan that absorbs the landless should be employed. In the same vein, the role of the local councils in conflict resolution should be recognized. There should be relationship building and ethnic reconciliation from grassroots levels to the key leaders in government and factions.

Generally, peace building efforts should be tailored along the hybrid partnerships that bring on board

professionals, women's groups, clan elders, business people and religious leaders for a synchronization of their diverse opinions.

IV. CONCLUSION

The work of local peace building organizations here is essential. They are able to build grassroots movements for peace and help traditional enemies resist violence. They are able to work in areas international organizations cannot access and are best placed to build peace in their own communities. (Peace Direct, 2011). There is need to revisit the Goma Peace initiative, crack down on war lords disrespecting the peace process, integrate rebels into the mainstream army and disarm those who wish to revert to civilian life through a moderated negotiation process. The DRC has to implement security reforms, work to strengthen its government, and increase cooperation with its neighbors. Secondly, neighboring countries have to help structurally reform certain DRC organizations, but to otherwise refrain from interfering with DRC internal affairs.

Agencies should integrate an accountability lens into all interventions and programmes, across all sectors. This should, in turn, be informed by detailed stakeholder and political economy analysis. The Congolese system of political representation should be reformed in order to adapt it to the country's social, communitarian and historic realities. Agencies promoting peace in eastern DRC must engage with the realities shaping state formation in DRC, moving away from static assertions of weakness to a more politically nuanced understanding of the patrimonial system. This would allow a more accurate identification of entry points for constructive change. Agencies should strive to draw on evidence and analysis as a core component of agency-wide and inter-agency strategic planning. This would help to ensure grounding and proper linkages between local, national and regional interventions.

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