



Towards A New *Pax Africana*: Building Peace In Africa

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1. Introduction: Building Peace in post-Cold War Africa

Post-colonial Africa has lived through an age of extremes. Since 1960, about 40 wars have resulted in over 10 million deaths and spawned more than 10 million refugees. Ali Mazrui, the foremost academic prophet of *Pax Africana*¹, was one of the earliest analysts to articulate the need for Africans to take on the responsibility of keeping, building and consolidating peace on their own continent. Kwame Nkrumah was an early political visionary who unsuccessfully pushed for an African High Command to keep the continental peace. African leaders were too busy attempting to transform their newly independent states into nations; their sovereignty was still too tenuous to cede to a supranational military body. But with conflicts continuing to rage in parts of the African continent, the need for a *Pax Africana* is as pressing today as it was four decades ago.

This contribution argues that Africa's conflicts have both internal and external roots. We will therefore situate the causes of African conflicts in both contemporary and historical structures and events. We then examine Africa's evolving governance architecture in the form of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The contribution then briefly assesses the recent efforts in the largely disappointing United Nations (UN) reform process of 2005 to implement three important initiatives: the "responsibility to protect" and the creation of a new UN Human Rights Council; the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission; and crafting an African Union (AU)/NEPAD Post-Conflict Reconstruction Framework. We conclude the paper by offering four peacebuilding lessons from Africa's post-cold war experiences.

It is worth briefly defining our understanding of the term "peacebuilding" before proceeding. Peacebuilding is often associated with the "second generation" of UN missions in the post-Cold War era of the early 1990s in places like Angola, Mozambique and Somalia where efforts have been made to adopt a holistic approach to peacemaking. Not only are diplomatic and military tools employed in building peace, today's peacebuilders also focus on political, social, and economic aspects of societies emerging from civil war in an effort to address the root causes of conflicts and to promote human security. Peacebuilding thus aims to achieve not just political peace, but social peace and the redressing of economic inequalities that could lead to further conflict. Such tasks have involved: strengthening and reforming civil services and judiciaries; supervising elections; repatriating refugees; developing reconciliation and restorative justice systems; monitoring and investigating human rights abuses; disarming and demobilising warring factions; restructuring and reforming security forces; building and repairing infrastructure; and

implementing land reform programmes.² Providing adequate resources and undertaking effective peacebuilding are therefore particularly important, especially since in half of post-conflict cases after the cold war, conflicts have resumed within five years due to inadequate peacebuilding.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted in his 1998 report on “The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa” that the causes of African conflicts are multifaceted and include both internal and external factors.³ He stressed the profound effect of colonialism and the cold war in shaping the African state system. Colonialism created the conditions for many of the ethnic grievances of the post-independence era through arbitrarily drawn colonial boundaries. The cold war affected the African state system by prolonging destabilising liberation wars and by creating military stalemates. As the cold war ended, the West abandoned autocrats that had served as reliable cold war clients. Even as the foreign aid that sustained cold war proxies in power was cut off, their trading networks came under increasing challenges from armed rebellions which increasingly replaced military coups as the main method for replacing sitting regimes. Economic reforms mandated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) further eroded the control of African autocrats as urban riots and social instability accompanied cuts in health and education and the removal of government subsidies on food and fuel. In an increasing number of states, governments could no longer exercise normal state functions of providing security, order and social services to their citizens and lost control over the monopoly of violence and state bureaucracies. Africa’s erstwhile strongmen revealed themselves to be emperors without clothes. Street protests led to multiparty reforms of varying degrees of transparency, while warlords led popular rebellions from the countryside to topple cold war dinosaurs like Zaire’s Mobutu, Somalia’s Barre, and Liberia’s Doe.

Beside these external sources of conflict, Africa’s post-independence leaders have also contributed to conflicts on the continent. Crafting federations and conceding autonomy to minority groups were rejected by many nation-builders who argued that one-party states were the only means to avoid destabilising ethnic wars and to preserve the unity needed to build their nations. Ghana, Guinea, Tanzania and Kenya were some of the early pioneers of monopoly politics. Ethno-regional differences were also exacerbated by nepotism and favouritism in appointments to military, political, and bureaucratic positions. The state became a cash cow to be milked for political patronage. Urban bias in development policies further created an aggrieved countryside full of a ready army of unemployed youth who have today become the cannon fodder of Africa’s warlords.

It is important to note that military solutions can only be short-term band-aids to more complex and deep-rooted social, economic, and political problems which armed peacekeepers can freeze but not resolve. External military power can only provide peaceful conditions to work out differences between parties. Viable institutions for managing conflicts and preventing them from becoming violent will still need to be built. The weapons of the weak in Africa may turn out to be smart diplomats to undertake preventive diplomacy and negotiate astute accords rather than smart bombs to undertake humanitarian war. Africa’s civil society actors — women’s groups, religious leaders, journalists, the business community and academics — have therefore become more directly involved in efforts at promoting local justice and national reconciliation; socio-

economic reconstruction; reintegration of child soldiers into society; and collecting information for early-warning systems. They could provide a rich resource for a new *Pax Africana*.

The end of the cold war also left security vacuums in Africa which regional organisations have attempted to fill.⁴ But the inability of African soldiers and mediators to defeat the ambitions of local warlords has often led to efforts to include them in peace agreements. The appeasement of warlords and the power-sharing arrangements that have been reached in countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, and Angola have proved to be largely unstable. It is therefore important that peace agreements not simply restore the *status quo ante bellum* and the structures that led to the conflict in the first place. Inclusive institutions must still be built and grievances corrected to ensure durable peace in Africa.⁵

2. Not Yet Uhuru: NEPAD, the APRM, and Democratic Governance

Many of Africa's post-cold war leaders have recognised that the continent can not achieve economic development and security without promoting democratic governance. In October 2001, African leaders from South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal and Algeria spearheaded the New Partnership for Africa's Development which seeks greater western aid, investment and debt relief in exchange for a self-monitored voluntary peer-review system of "good governance".⁶ NEPAD's Democracy and Governance programme calls on African leaders to commit themselves to political and economic "good governance;" free and fair elections; and accountable and transparent management of their economies. Countries are also to submit themselves to an African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). 26 African countries have so far signed up for review, with APRM missions having visited Ghana, Rwanda, Mauritius, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and South Africa. Work is also continuing with Algeria, Egypt, Mali, Mozambique and Senegal.

Under the APRM process, each country prepares a national programme of action after undertaking a self-evaluation which involves government officials, civil society and the private sector. The APRM panel of eminent persons then submits a country review report to help governments identify institutional, policy, and capacity weaknesses, before recommending remedies to these shortcomings. The peer review mechanism is intended to encourage countries to adopt sound policies, priorities and standards for political, economic, development and sub-regional and continental integration through shared experiences. The process has five stages: first, the panel of eminent persons studies the political, economic, and corporate governance as well as the development environment of countries under review, based on background documents produced by the APRM secretariat in South Africa as well as material from national, sub-regional and international organisations; second, political parties, parliamentarians, the private sector and civil society are consulted; third, the team's report is prepared; fourth, the report is submitted to APRM heads of state for adoption; and finally, six months after the adoption of the report, the document is tabled to key regional bodies such as the Pan African Parliament (PAP), the AU's 15-member Peace and Security Council (PSC), its Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.⁷

NEPAD seeks to distinguish itself from past development plans through its explicit emphasis on African "ownership" of ideas and its pledge to uphold norms of democratic governance and market policies in exchange for a partnership with external donors. But,

while NEPAD is ostensibly a programme of the AU; NEPAD and AU officials have often presented the initiatives to African governments, civil society groups and donors independently, leading to an impression of rivalry between the two bodies. There have been criticisms of duplication in the activities of both initiatives. Far from being the development arm of the AU, there has been acrimonious disputes between the AU Commission in Addis Ababa and the NEPAD secretariat in Midrand, South Africa. The decision to integrate NEPAD into the AU by 2006 will therefore not be an easy one to implement.

Assistance to NEPAD has also so far failed to materialise at the level of \$64 billion a year that African leaders had hoped, leading to a widespread questioning of the initiative by civil society groups on the continent. South Africa — which effectively bankrolls the NEPAD secretariat — is also increasingly accused of seeking to dominate the initiative for its own parochial foreign policy interests.⁸ Donors have stressed the importance of African leaders adhering to NEPAD's principles of "good governance" in order to secure their support. This has led to concerns on the continent that the initiative will be used selectively by donors as a condition for providing assistance in return for punishing particular African leaders whom the West dislikes. NEPAD has also been criticised by African civil society activists as being a "top-down" plan by continental leaders who failed to consult their citizens. It has been labelled a neo-liberal, self-imposed structural adjustment programme (SAP) that has abandoned the self-reliance goals of the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) of 1980.⁹ In order to enjoy credibility and legitimacy, NEPAD must promote human rights and democratic governance; stem corruption; build the bridges; repair the roads; and attract the investment that Africa badly needs for its industrial take-off.

3. Africa's "Responsibility to Protect" and UN/AU Peacebuilding Initiatives

The UN High-Level Panel report of December 2004 adopted the ideas of the Canadian-sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) on the "responsibility to protect." The Commission argued that if governments are unwilling or unable to protect their citizens from serious harm, then the international community has a duty to protect them, ignoring the principle of non-intervention for a higher goal. In his landmark *An Agenda for Peace*, published in 1992, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali argued forcefully for humanitarian intervention and advocated the use of regional security arrangements to lighten the UN's heavy peacekeeping burden. Kofi Annan's promotion of humanitarian intervention has met with strong opposition from many African leaders. They fear that such interventions might be used to threaten their own sovereignty by powerful states. This is ironic considering that the AU's Constitutive Act of 2000 has one of the most interventionist systems in the world in cases of genocide; egregious human rights violations; unconstitutional changes of government; and situations that have the potential to lead to regional instability.

The efforts to create a UN Human Rights Council in 2005 was driven largely by the concerns of the US and other western countries that the Human Rights Commission was ineffectual and lacked credibility. Washington — which has been widely criticized for human rights abuses in Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib — and its allies favoured instead a body elected by two-thirds of the UN's members rather than by regional blocs. African

governments questioned the need for a human rights body with universal membership. They called instead for an organ that would report to the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). A 47-member Council eventually emerged by April 2006 in which members would be nominated by regional blocs; the body will meet more frequently than the Human Rights Commission; and two-thirds of the General Assembly can vote offending countries off the Council.

Related to the idea of humanitarian intervention is the concept of peacebuilding, which, if effectively undertaken, can help avoid such interventions through early prevention of conflicts. The UN reform process of 2005 backed the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission as well as a Peacebuilding Support Office within the UN secretariat in New York. The Peacebuilding Commission aims to improve UN post-conflict planning, focusing particularly on establishing institutions; ensuring financing in the period between the end of hostilities and the convening of donor conferences; and improving coordination of UN bodies and other key regional and global actors. This Commission will interact both with the 15-member UN Security Council and its Economic and Social Council, and will involve the participation of international financial institutions. The Peacebuilding Commission is composed of 31 members — including 7 from Africa, with Angola as its first chair — from the Security Council; ECOSOC; and the largest financial and troop-contributors to the UN. Burundi and Sierra Leone are the first cases to be examined from September 2006. A multi-year standing fund is to be established with voluntary contributions. Due to pressure from developing countries, the Commission will focus largely on post-conflict reconstruction and not on conflict prevention. Many Africans are, however, sceptical — based on UN experiences in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Central African Republic (CAR) — and feel that this Commission may represent a new alchemy that will not make much difference in mobilising the resources required for post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Africa.

Like the UN, the African Union is also developing its own post-conflict reconstruction strategy, adopting an African Post-Conflict Reconstruction Policy Framework in June 2005.¹⁰ This approach stresses the interdependence between the security, humanitarian and development aspects of peacebuilding. The AU argues against a one-size-fits-all approach, and instead urges local “ownership” of peacebuilding processes that are tailored to fit the specific circumstances of individual countries. With the AU's 7,000-strong force (AMIS II) having struggled to keep — let alone *build* — peace in Sudan's troubled Darfur region since 2004 amidst political, financial and logistical difficulties, many have questioned whether the pan-continental body and sub-regional organisations in Africa should not instead prioritise peacemaking and peacekeeping and leave more expensive peacebuilding tasks to the better-resourced and more experienced UN, World Bank and the IMF.¹¹

4. Learning Lessons: Creating an APRM “Inner Core” and Imbibing the Experiences of *Pax West Africana*

In concluding this contribution, it is important to offer four practical recommendations for building peace in Africa. African leaders must establish more effective ways of monitoring their governance responsibilities. They must also learn the lessons of peacebuilding efforts in sub-regions like West Africa. The heirs of Nkrumah have been in the *avant garde* of

global peacebuilding: the Economic Community of West African States Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) intervention in Liberia between 1990 and 1998 was the first such action by a sub-regional organisation in Africa, and represented the first time that the UN had sent military observers to support an already established sub-regional force. The ECOMOG intervention in Sierra Leone to restore the democratically elected government of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah to power in 1998 was equally unprecedented. ECOWAS launched further interventions into Guinea-Bissau (1999) and Côte d'Ivoire (2003).

First, a few well-governed African states should eventually create an "inner core" within the AU to enshrine term limits for heads of state in regional and domestic constitutions. Africa needs political and economic role models. Within the next decade, African leaders must establish an effective peer review mechanism which has some "teeth," by devising a mechanism for excluding errant regimes from the African peer review process. Initiatives like NEPAD and sub-regional governance protocols must be strengthened in pursuing these goals. African leaders shunned military regimes in Côte d'Ivoire and Comoros in 2000, and refused to deal with military putschists in Guinea-Bissau in 2003. Such trends must continue in line with the AU's stance against unconstitutional changes of regime.

Second, African governments and the international community must provide the resources necessary to restructure national armies. It is critical for future stability that a truly national army and police force be created, built with equitable regional and factional representation, and enjoying the confidence of the population. Post-conflict governments need security forces that are capable of defending democratic institutions from internally and externally inspired threats. The mistakes made in the restructuring of the Liberian army in 1997, with Charles Taylor mainly recruiting its former faction fighters, must be avoided in future.

Third, any successful post-conflict strategy must be sub-regional and take into account the inter-connectedness of conflicts in Africa. Liberia's civil war spilled into Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea; sub-regional governments backed various warring factions; and most significantly, warlords in Liberia and Sierra Leone assisted each other. Ways must be found to support ECOWAS and similar regional bodies to channel resources to joint commercial and infrastructural projects which can link countries together to promote peaceful co-operation rather than violent confrontation. The establishment of a UN office in West Africa in Senegal in 2002 to support ECOWAS and civil society groups is a positive development. Other UN offices seek to promote peacebuilding in the Great Lakes and Central Africa, in collaboration with local actors.

Finally, regional peacekeepers in West Africa and other parts of Africa must be provided, in a timely manner, with the logistical and financial resources they need if such missions are to achieve their goals. The Liberia case revealed that, if these resources and funds are provided by external actors, and if there is a will on the part of the parties to disarm their factions, even a poorly resourced regional body like ECOWAS can achieve some success. Though programmes were developed in Liberia and Sierra Leone to provide jobs for demobilised fighters and to reintegrate them into their local communities, these were mostly short-term. Civil society groups must also be supported in efforts to entrench peace since they can play an important role in reintegrating ex-combatants into their communities and mediating local disputes. The international community must dig deeper

to increase the derisory amounts dedicated to post-conflict peacebuilding tasks in Africa. In 1999, the UN humanitarian appeal for Kosovo sought \$690 million, while that for Sierra Leone requested a paltry \$22 million.¹²

Working with institutions like the UN Peacebuilding Commission, external donors must also show more understanding for the plight of cash-strapped governments in countries devastated by civil wars like Liberia and Sierra Leone. Debts will have to be forgiven or substantially reduced — as is already occurring in some cases — while borrowing restrictions and stringent aid conditionalities must be eased on these countries until they have recovered sufficiently from the ravages of war. More, not less, resources must still be found to nurse these international patients back to health. It is critical that the golden opportunity to build peace in countries like Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, Central African Republic, and Sudan not be squandered by the frugality of an indifferent international community and the recklessness of undemocratic African leaders.

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ENDNOTES

¹ See Ali Mazrui, *Towards a Pax Africana*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

² See Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda For Peace*, (New York: United Nations, 1992); Olara Otunnu and Michael Doyle (eds.), *Peacemaking and Peacekeeping for the New Century*, (Lanham, New York, Boulder and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1998); The World Bank, *Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Role of the World Bank*, (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1998); and I. William Zartman, *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995).

³ See "The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa." Report of the UN Secretary-General. 13 April 1998, S/1998/318.

⁴ See Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), "Building an African Union for the Twenty-First Century: Relations with the RECS, NEPAD and African Civil Society" Seminar report, 20-22 August 2005. (<http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za>); and Musifiky Mwanasali, "Emerging Security Architecture in Africa," Centre for Policy Studies, Policy: Issues and Actors, vol. 7 no.4, February 2004.

⁵ This section borrows from Adekeye Adebajo and Chris Landsberg, "Pax Africana in the Age of Extremes", *South African Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 7 no. 1, Summer 2000.

⁶ See, for example, Adebayo Adedeji, "From Lagos to NEPAD", *New Agenda*, Issue 8, Fourth quarter 2002, pp. 32-47; and International Peace Academy, "NEPAD: African Initiative, New Partnership?", report of a policy seminar in New York, July 2002.

⁷ This paragraph is based on Adebayo Adedeji, "NEPAD's Africa Peer Review Mechanism: Progress and Prospects." Keynote address at the CCR policy seminar on *Building an African Union for the 21st Century: Relations with the RECS, NEPAD and Civil Society*, Cape Town, South Africa, 20-22 August 2005.

⁸ See the insightful article by Chris Landsberg, "SA should take heed of the Harsh Criticisms against NEPAD," *City Press*, 12 March 2006, p.28.

⁹ See Patrick Bond (ed.), *Fanon's Warning: A Civil Society Reader on the New Partnership for Africa's Development*, Second Edition, (Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press, 2005).

¹⁰ New Partnership for Africa's Development, *African Post-Conflict Reconstruction Policy Framework*, (Midrand: NEPAD Secretariat, June 2005).

¹¹ See the CCR/Friedrich Ebert Stiftung conference report of the Maputo seminar of 3 and 4 August 2006, "African Perspectives on the UN Peacebuilding Commission." Rapporteurs: Tim Murithi and Helen Scanlon. (Available at <http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za>).

¹² Eighth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone. 23 September 1999. S/1999/1003, p.5.