

Mitigating African Conflicts Through Securitization of Development

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Introduction

The 1990s introduced profound shifts in the realm of peace and security in Africa. With the demise of the Cold War, the East-West tension eased considerably. South Africa and Namibia installed democratically elected governments. Mozambique achieved relative peace and stability after decades of warring struggles (Rugummamu and Osman 2003).

Many other African countries conducted democratic elections. These developments indeed reflected positive steps to peace. However, whereas many parts of the world moved closer to peace, stability and development, Africa remained quite unstable (Rugummamu and Osman 2003).

Political insecurity and protracted violence have increasingly marked the African continent. Ironically, the continent's institutional and organizational capacity to mitigate these conflicts has not developed at the same pace as the escalation of conflict. Within this realm, peace and peacemaking in Africa emerge as critical issues in global politics (Rugummamu and Osman 2003).

The societal conflicts in Africa have always been made complex by poverty, illiteracy and weak systems of governance. The capacity of many states in Africa to

adequately respond to the critical social needs of the citizens has equally declined. This is what Rugummamu (2001) refers to as traumatic episodes of collapsed and fragile states.¹

The State Nexus and Conflicts

Evidently state collapses are outcomes of long term degenerative politics characterized by a loss of control over the economic and political space. This phenomenon of state collapse has consequent effect on neighboring countries. The displacement of refugees, increased ethnic tension, diplomatic conflicts, has engaged significant resources and efforts from relatively stable states that border them (Zartman 1995).

The aim of conflict prevention then becomes one of reducing the likelihood of specific conflicts becoming, or continuing

¹ "Fragile State" are understood to be countries facing latent or protracted conflict (including situations of war), countries emerging from conflict (with major uncertainties as to their future stability) and countries directly affected by regional conflicts. Their "fragility" can take different forms. In the extreme cases, state structures have disappeared. In other cases, the central state may appear strong (e.g. in terms of military control), but lacks legitimacy, controls only part of the national territory or fails to deliver even the most basic services (including in developmental terms). The net result is generally a situation of chronic instability, insecurity, violation of human rights, economic and social collapse, high levels of aid dependency and rising levels of absolute poverty (Rugummamu 2001)

to be physically violent (Goodhand and Hulme 1999). Various called, conflict, or complex political emergencies, they may be characterized by such features; first, they take place within or across state boundaries. Essentially, the conflict may originate within a particular state, they easily have spillover effects.

Secondly, these situations are mostly political in nature. The struggles and competition for power and valued scarce resources is quite significant in social conflicts. Third, conflicts tend to have multiple and interconnected causes. Fourth, they are protracted in nature. Fifth, they are embedded and are expressions of cleavages in existing social, political, economic and cultural differences and finally conflicts involve predatory social formations. These formations may take the form of ethno-nationalism where groups are mobilized and violently manipulated by conflict entrepreneurs and political leaders (Goodhand and Hulme 1999).

Ethnic nationalism and state centered nationalism thus manifests a form of identity formation, conceptualized as the process of intensifying the subjective meanings of a multiplicity of symbols and of striving to achieve multisymbol

congruence among a group of people defined initially by one or more central symbols, whether those symbols are ethnic attributes or loyalty to a particular state (Brass 1991). Nationalism emerges as a reaction to objective exploitation of an indigenous group by an alien group, or by one social class by another (Chong – do Har and Jeffrey Martin 1975).

Barth's anthropological view of ethnicity emphasizes its contextual, circumstantial, and situational dimensions (1969). Thus identity emerges through particular economic, political and social conditions and is a product of the context in which an individual finds himself/herself. Ethnic identity is therefore adaptive and voluntaristic (Davis 1996).

The reality of contemporary issues associated with identity has called for new re-conceptualization of culture and identity which stresses "social constructedness as opposed to primordialism, optionality as opposed to determinism, fragmentation and diversification as opposed to integration and homogenization, and multidimensionality and dynamism as opposed to static unidimensionality (Lapid 1996).

Within this background, states could be viewed though as critical pillars of global

as well as territorial constructions of various identities, they are not homogenous bodies but “collectivities full of people with multiple identities and loyalties” (Krause and Renwick 1996). It is true too, that at sub nation state levels “identities are constructed and can, therefore be deconstructed and reconstructed anew” (Krause and Renwick 1996).

This phenomenon of nation building was quite evident in post-colonial state in Africa, where construction and reconstruction of identities occurred in a climate of instability and violence. Emerging conflicts in Africa, therefore assume competing loyalties where disaffection of or among groups/identities find solace in ethnic or “tribal” bonds as alternative forms of solidarity to their perceived insecurity (Malaquias 2007). “Ethnicity” retains its potency as a focus of identification in the absence of strong legitimate alternative identities (Davies 1996).

Accommodation, tolerance and coping capacities of the poor, marginalized, excluded are enormously taxing. This is due to the fact that conflicts do engender violent destruction of structural conditions particularly through authoritarian rule and absence of political rights, state weakness

and ineffective institutional capacity to mitigate conflict (Rugumamu and Osman 2003).

The risk factors for an outbreak of violence becomes high when these conditions are exacerbated by other problems, such as manipulation of ethnic or other social issues (in religion, culture and language). These have the effect of fragmenting society thereby intensifying conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 1999, Colleta and Cullen 2000).

Primordialism provides a reinforcing perception where individuals entertain stereotypes about others. They therefore see opponents negatively and impute malicious motives. In this way, a conflict map is elevated to serve as a conceptual guide to clarify the nature and dynamics of a conflict (Wehr 1995 and Rugumamu 2001).

With the escalation of conflict into violence, the critical concern of neighboring states, civil society and the United Nations is to step in and facilitate the one direction process and transform structures that trigger insecurity and structural violence into positive peace (Galtung 1995).

Johan Galtung further clarifies that absence of violence among groups may not necessarily imply peace. He describes this conception as “negative peace”, suggesting that underlying points of conflict must themselves be resolved in order for true peace¹ to exist (1995). Mahatma Gandhi suggested that if an oppressive society lacks violence, the society is nonetheless not peaceful, because of the injustice of the oppression. Gandhi posited a vision of peace in which justice is an inherent and necessary aspect; that peace requires not only the absence of violence but also the presence of justice. Galtung described this peace, peace with justice, as “positive peace” (1995). True peace, therefore, is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice. Galtung thus coined the term structural violence to explain such situations, which although not violent on the surface, harbour systematic oppression and injustice (1995).

Proponents of democratic peace theory emphasize that empirical evidence exists that democracies never or rarely make war

¹ Johan Galtung makes a clear distinction between “positive” and “negative” peace. Positive peace encompasses an ideal of how society should be. It requires that not only all types of violence be minimal or non-existent, but also that the major potential causes of future conflict be removed. The notion of negative peace is defined as the end of widespread violent conflict associated with war. It may include prevalent social violence and structural violence. For details see Galtung (1995; 1998)

against each other. Though critics dispute this observation, emphasizing other factors as wealth, power and stability are equally important

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/peace>).

It should be noted that conflicts in which the state is an effective arbiter do not create particular difficulties, since a mitigating framework could be achieved. The problem emerges, when the state itself is a party to the conflict, since under such conditions, external intervention becomes necessary (Rugumamu and Osman 2003). Furthermore, institutions that are internally consistent have the lowest risk of breaching down, since such institutions are self-reinforcing. In an emerging democracy, this implies a wide distribution of power and inclusiveness in the political system (Collier 2003).

Strategic partnership forged between government, private sector and civil society is critical to successful post-conflict reconstruction in order to prevent recidivism to violent conflict. Since the end of the Cold War, nearly half of African countries have experienced some type of conflict, mostly in the low-income ones (UNAIDS 2003). This indicates a link between poverty and conflict.

Protracted violent conflicts continue to affect millions of women, men, boys and girls, communities, businesses and even the legitimacy of government. In the case of Somalia, the entire government machinery collapsed. In some countries conflict is still active, in others it is dormant. In other countries, such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and DRC are characterized by periods of activity and dormancy.

Put differently, while other regions enjoy relative peace and economic growth and prosperity, Africa, for most part, is entangled in incessant conflict, largely internal and general economic malaise. Violent conflict is simply a major constraint to development in Africa.

It is therefore within this realization that issues of peace, security and good governance have taken a center stage in the new development framework for Africa. This was at the forefront of discussions in many fora in Africa. The challenge here is on how to find long lasting solutions to Africa's seemingly intractable conflicts that will go beyond mere halting of hostilities to incorporate post-conflict reconstruction, rehabilitation and reintegration (UNAIDS 2003).

At a conference of Committee on Human Development and Civil Society and UNAIDS held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in May 2003, it was observed that most of Africa's conflicts have been recursive not least because solutions have been truncated and short-sighted leaving out the full range of conflict resolution mechanisms, which must include post-conflict reconstruction (UNAIDS 2003).

The efforts to rebuild the livelihoods in societies from civil wars into relative peace are critical in order to prevent recidivism into violent conflict. Post-conflict reconstruction eases the transition to sustainable peace after hostilities have reduced and supports socio-economic development (CHDCS 2003). This exercise/task is beyond the capacity of unilateral actors, whether intergovernmental, governmental or civil society. It is a process that relies on a partnership between many actors acting in a concerted effort.

Essentially all stakeholders need to engage in reforming political, economic and social relationships if the process is to succeed. Therefore areas of complementarities between the entities should be sought (CHDCS 2030).

The African Union had adopted measures in establishing organs to facilitate prevention and resolution with the renewed spirit of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) that guarantees space for citizens' participation (Elbadawi 2000). This novel idea requires guidelines and lessons from successful cases that would direct future post-conflict activities.

It is imperative that the nature, origins and impact of current armed conflicts internationally be fully understood before attempts are made towards formulation for integration, peace building and reconstruction to avoid refueling the conflict.

Elbadawi (2000) observes that the common recurring focus in the studies on causes of African conflicts has been ethnicity and religion. This theme gained frequency because most of African conflicts have ethnic and religious coloration. Notwithstanding this, recent literature demonstrates that such an assertion is simplistic and that as opposed to this belief, Africa's civil wars are not due to ethnic and religious diversity. Rather, most conflicts in Africa are attributed to high levels of poverty failed political institutions and economic dependence on natural resources.

Adedeji (1999) argues that poverty and the underlying competition for resources is at the heart of conflict. For example in Angola, the struggle for control of oil and diamond producing areas was the source of the conflict. Therefore the struggle for political power in many African countries is essentially the struggle to acquire control over resources and the means of production.

Bigambe et al (2000) underscore the fact that the lower the per capita GDP the higher the likelihood of civil wars. There is little doubt therefore, that there is a direct correlation between civil strife and poverty. Put differently, poverty or lack of alternative economic opportunities is one of three major policy-related risk factors that can lead to conflict or re-start conflict.

Further, poor governance, disrespect of the rule of law, social exclusion and intolerance have been at the core of many civil wars in Africa. In a number of cases in Africa are characterized by situations where political leaders find it difficult to abide by democratic principles of tolerance, encouraging participatory development, to refrain from violence and use intimidation as a means of resolving domestic conflicts (UNAIDS 2003).

The recursive nature of conflicts has energized focus on the multiple challenges of rebuilding countries emerging from conflict. The cessation of hostilities does not mean the end of a conflict. The transition process from war to peace involves not only overcoming the structural causes that initially sparked the fighting, but also effectively mitigating ongoing conflict and dealing with the legacies of conflict, which characterize the challenges of the post-conflict situation (UNAIDS 2003).

The challenges are multivarious, where security of the individual and respect for basic human rights is thus the pillar of political and economic stabilization. Achieving these, requires the rebuilding of credible institutions at the central as well as at the local and community levels as they will have determining influence on the entire/whole process of reconstruction, beginning from the restoration of productive sectors of the economy, the return of capital to disarmament (UNAIDS 2003).

The key issues in reconstruction, as many scholars argue, include, first, infrastructural recovery, including water, sanitation, shelter and transportation; secondly, food security and agricultural rehabilitation, including land tenure

designation and registration; thirdly, urgent health, education and basic social welfare requirements including employment and income generation and finally demobilization and reintegration, which takes priority in the peace process because security must be enhanced, the rule of law promoted, development stimulated and refugees repatriated (UNAIDS 2003).

Human Development and Civil society (HDCS) underscored the fact that rebuilding bridges of communication between social groups and promoting participation in political life is therefore a necessary but daunting challenge for social reconstruction. In this context, post-conflict reconstruction policy must deliberately foster the re-emergence of civil society (2003).

The process of reconstruction is so monumental that is certainly beyond the capacity of any single entity. Various stakeholders are crucial through a partnership predicated upon identifying and recognizing the challenges of post-conflict situation, sorting out comparative advantages and synergizing, staking out mutual responsibilities and accountabilities (UNAIDS 2003).

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), demonstrates how post-conflict partnerships impact on peace, uses the case in Liberia. In 1989, Liberia witnessed a wave of armed insurrection by rebel forces. This was to mark seven years of factional fighting. With the termination of fighting in 1996 though still intermittent outbursts continued. Civil Society organizations were involved in administering relief and brokering peace alongside their sub-regional, regional and international partners (1999).

The protracted civil war ravaged Liberia's agricultural and industrial productivity. As a result, the requirements for reconstruction were immense, beyond any single actor. Consequently, NGOs participated in conducting peace building through community development, rehabilitation and reconstruction (UNECA 1999). They facilitated micro-projects to help rehabilitate, repatriate, reconstruct and rebuild. The Monrovia based Centre for Democratic Empowerment (CDE) strongly led a campaign in support of disarmament and demobilization of former fighters. Also CDE facilitated meetings, workshops and conferences targeting women, children, traditional leaders and leaders in government and civil society (UNECA 1999).

Similarly, Mozambique's experience in post-conflict exigencies that led to civil war in the 1980s shows how the civil society played a leading role in nurturing an environment for sustained peace. The Mozambican Association for Rural Development (AMODER) promotes the improvement of living conditions for rural communities and to enhance their level of food security. Primarily, AMODER mobilized resources for credit support services and institutional capacity building. AMODER continued to support, credit concessions, to small-scale rural traders and enterprises and rehabilitation of commercial and productive infrastructures¹.

In the South Eastern Europe, conflict had also had a remarkable economic impact. It took the effort of the East West Institute (EWI) to initiate a working relationship between governments, private sectors to contribute to the stabilization and economic revitalization of South Eastern Europe. The efforts of Action Network for South Eastern Europe (ANSEE), EWI launched a task force on economic strategy, which intended to mobilize the

¹ For a deeper insight into the role of CSOs in micro-financing, see ILO, the Evolution of Microfinance in a successful Post-Conflict Transition: The case of Mozambique document prepared for the joint ILO/UNHCR workshop, Geneva, September 1999.

private sector efforts for post-economic reconstruction in the region. The task force provided a blueprint on stimulating domestic and foreign investments (UNECA 1999).

Post Conflict Reconstruction

A World Bank study, a framework for World Bank involvement in Post-Conflict Reconstruction (1997), identifies country conflict as one that has in the recent past witnessed widespread violence. In such cases, the state is preoccupied in armed struggle, the state has failed or a significant part of the population is engaged in armed struggle with the state.

Consequently, the World Bank report argues that external agencies to understand the history and the reasons for failure in order to design informed intervention strategies (1997). The aim of these intervention mechanisms is to facilitate the transition from war to sustainable peace, support the resumption of economic and social development, and determine at what point in the post-conflict process is a particular country judged to have achieved a relative state of normalcy. The World Bank proposed benchmarks for evaluating the progress to normalcy to include;

macroeconomic stability and its likely sustainability; recovery of private sector confidence, as measured by the investment ratio; and the effectiveness with which institutional arrangements and the political system are coping with the tensions, schisms and behaviors that lay behind the conflict to begin with (World Bank 1998).

This report however generalizes the evolution toward normalcy and the benchmarks for evaluating progress remain contentious. Furthermore, the nature of conflicts differs, *inter alia*, in duration, in the intensity and scope of destruction. So is the military strength and political strength of opponents and the degree to which the middle and upper classes are affected by hostilities. Whereas the conflicts in Uganda and Sierra Leone were products of state failure due to predatory or ineffectual governance, the erosion of the Rwandan state was a product of ethnic-cum-regional conflict and the Mozambican state's failure was due to ideological conflict.

Post-conflict reconstruction, like post-natural disaster reconstruction, is concerned with repairing and reconstructing the physical and economic infrastructure and also aims at rebuilding weakened institutions. Reconstruction incorporates jump-starting the economy,

reconstructing the framework for democratic governance, rebuilding and maintaining key social infrastructure and planning for financial normalization (Rugumamu and Osman 2003). Reconstruction is necessitated by the fact that civil war alters both the level and the structure of economic activity in ways which persist beyond the war (World Bank, 1998; Colletta and Cullen 2000).

The devastation of human, social and physical capital that characterize post-conflict phase through peace agreements, require a paradigm shift for diagnosing and prescribing policy interventions which should be conflict mitigating (World Bank 1998). Capacity building needs to be addressed at three levels: individual, institutional and societal. The three layers of capacity are mutually interdependent to the extent that any post-conflict reconstruction should embrace them (Browne 2002).

At the individual level, capacity building target to enable individuals learn skills that build knowledge in a continuous process and extending these further in search of new opportunities. Institutionally, capacity building involves building existing capacities, rather than trying to construct new and alien ones. It aims to seek existing initiatives, however nascent and

encourages these to grow. Finally at the societal level, capacity building targets facilitatory process of opening and widening of opportunities that allow people to maximize their capacities to the fullest (Browne 2002). Social capital and cohesion are the pillars of societal capacity and apply both nationally and locally.

Browne therefore summarizes the concept of capacity building in reconstruction as comprising various processes. Broadly, first, is creating new capacities (Capacity creation), second is effectively mobilizing and utilizing existing capacities (Capacity utilization) and finally, sustaining the created capacity over time (Capacity retention).

Peace building

Collier (2003) observes that peace-building processes towards reconstructing war-torn societies involve “triple transition”; a security transition from war to peace; a political transition from authoritarianism to a more participatory form of government; and a socio-economic reconstruction. These are reinforced by enabling environment in which there is citizen security, the rule of law, equitable distribution of resources, functioning

markets, responsive governance, an active civil society and basic trust among national actors.

Though Collier (2003) sets clear the key ingredients in peace-building, expectations of what can be achieved remain unrealistic with regard to transferring democratic capacities, estimating the time it will take to realize goals, and determining rational mechanisms and structures of effective policy dialogue with different national actors. Khadiagala (1995) observes, conceptually, post-conflict peace building usually deals with rejuvenating institutional mechanisms that previously defined consistency to state action, legitimizing power, nurturing social trust and enabling the state to assume center of political life. This, Khadiagala argues extends to national and local authorities (through inclusiveness and transparency).

Foltz (1995) identifies six basic elements as important in peace building; first, reestablishment of the state's control over the means of coercion (military, police and security) throughout the territory to secure security. This entails thorough reform of the security sector and urgent phased demobilization and reintegration program of former combatants. Secondly, reestablishing the state's fiscal capacity; third; restoring macroeconomic

management capacity, fourth; developing a functioning judiciary, fifth; decentralizing decision making and expenditure authority and finally improving governance and transparency.

Foltz (1995), basic elements failed to answer such basic questions as who and what has to be protected and for whom. Ultimately argues Abramovitz (1996), the effectiveness of international interventions to development largely depends on internal conditions.

The point is that for peace to be attained in any society, the citizens must be "trained" by the concerned agents, particularly the government, if they are to meet society requirements. The lack of a legitimate/recognized government as in the case of Somalia has the effect of compromising security. For at the heart of government's legal existence is the consent of the governed, which can only be achieved through an acceptable/prescribed form i.e. elections. The absence of elections (read periodic elections) in Somalia leads to the crucial issue of: Under whose authority is the interim government of Somalia ruling? It is this question of authority and legitimacy that contributes the general lawlessness in Somalia (for the so-called-government) is

unable to impose its values/beliefs upon its subject population.

The work of Thomas Hobbes “Leviathan” can also provide the much-needed insight into the issue of security or insecurity thereof. Hobbes argues that man’s passion for war is stronger but the negative consequences of war make men to reason (for emphasis) and seek peace. Could it be that the conflict situation in Somalia is due to the absence of “reason” among the major players in the conflict? Arguably, is it possible that the major players in the conflict are yet to recognize the adverse effects of the conflict thus their non-chalant attitude towards peace? With time, may be months or even years, the “conflict perpetrators will “apply reason”, come together, and seek peace as happened in Sudan (between the Khartoum government and the SPLA), or even Angola following the defeat and death of the Jonas Savimbi led guerrilla movement.

Conflict is primarily attributable to resource scarcity and distribution, be it economic, social or political. Scarcity and skewed distribution of resources may lead to frustration among the disadvantaged groups with the resultant effect being insecurity as each group/individual try to increase their “share of gratification” within the political system.

Karl Marx argued that conflict is an inevitable and pervasive feature of a social system and it manifests itself in the opposition of interests. According to Marx, every society is divided into two dominant classes of the owing and non-owing thus underlining the unequal distribution of scarce resources within society. Antagonism becomes a constant factor in a society’s development that gives rise to structural changes that aim at the redistribution of resources.

Waltz (2001) in his work “Man, the state and war” aptly captures the argument that war is traceable to human nature and behavior. The natural order is when people or individuals resort to violence within, between and among themselves. It is through war that man’s frustrations find an escape-root.

The more intense the conflict, the more benefits accrued to the “selfish individuals”. Such individual (read warlords and their followers) will employ violence, insecurity mainly for self-preservation while benefiting the manufactures of weapons of destruction and their agents. Benefits come in the form of consistent profit flows.

It is increasingly common to view security in an all encompassing manner, particularly in the post-9/11 world. Development is one important domain that has been merged and subjected to security concerns (Duffield 2001).

What became “securitization of development” was more visible in the 1990s as far as the internal armed conflict in poorer countries and escalating crime and violence in developing and rapidly urbanizing economies. Many arguments raised by scholars underscored the correlation between economic inequality, underdevelopment and poor governance with armed conflict and crime. Tony Blair declared in 2004: “We know that poverty and instability lead to weak states which can become havens for terrorists and other criminals Even before 9/11, al-Qaeda had bases in Africa They still do, hiding in places where they can go undisturbed by weak governments, planning their next attacks which could be anywhere in the world, including Africa.” (Tony Blair quoted in Mail and Guardian 7 October 2004).

Whereas underdevelopment could trigger armed conflicts, the consequences of conflict become more glaring in terms of missed development opportunities, disintegration and failing states. Menkhaus

(2004) calls it the “vicious circle metaphor” evident in, for example the World Bank’s notion of the “conflict trap” (World Bank 2003) – obliges development institutions to systematically integrate crime prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction, demobilization, security reforms and good governance into development interventions (UNRISD 1995, OECD/DAC 1997, World Bank 1998, Danida 2004).

The concept of security has equally undergone changes. It has been broadened to the extent that the idea of “human security” implies that a number of basic human needs have been viewed as being indispensable for the survival of an individual (UNDP 1994). Human security rests on the safety of the citizens and a sovereignty that is based on a state’s respect for the rights of its citizens (Duffield 2004).

Such conceptual and institutional changes call for a rethinking of the concepts of development and security. This necessitates a thorough investigation of the effects of these changes (Jensen and Finn 2007).

While acknowledging that power works through the social organization of space in different “territorializing regimes” (Wilson

2004), it is less surprising that the production of spaces and boundaries represents a continuous linkage between development – security from the colonial times to the present.

Conclusion

Put differently, when people's ideas are valued differently and endowed in terms of capacities for development, self-determination and decency combine with strategic designs for the containment and control of danger and threat, we tend to get a "police concept of history" i.e. the production of a visual dichotomy of ideal, safe spaces and dystrophic, risk-laden spaces that impinge on and threaten safe spaces (Feldman 2004). As De Certeau (1984) posits, this division of space between civilized "proper places" and unruly (barbarian) environment that can be made subject of surveillance from proper places, is a constant figure of strategic thinking in military, political and business circles.

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