

Considering the relevance of peacebuilding within external interventions in Africa

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Summary

This paper questions the continued relevance of peacebuilding within external interventions in Africa. For peacebuilding to be relevant means not only dealing with the causes of conflicts passed, but also engaging with the harbingers of violence. These harbingers are the effects of inequality, prolonged through networks of obligation within patronage-based political systems that encourage the ambitious to harness localised grievances and conditions of impoverishment, and translate these into violence. If current trends prevail, future conflicts in Africa will be about the collective denial of individual rights in order to maintain and extend current configurations of power.

2014 WAS A violent year. The relative stability of the early 21st century, buoyed by the optimism of the post-conflict era of the late-1990s, has been slowly eroded as complex conflicts continue to simmer and boil from Afghanistan to Iraq, Ukraine, Pakistan and Myanmar. Terrorism, organised crime and other forms of non-state armed violence have been replaced by more traditional forms of organised lethal force fighting for political objectives. In Africa, conflicts that had seemingly been resolved flared as violence once again become the vehicle for political competition in countries such as South Sudan and Mozambique. In the Central African Republic (CAR), Nigeria, Mali and Sudan, centres of power between Islamic and Christian populations are being violently challenged as clashes of identity, politics and modernisation consume societies. Libya and Egypt have shown the limitations of regime change, while the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somalia continue to prove how difficult is it to build states over large territories that have diverse and peripheral, yet influential centres of economic and political power.

Within this milieu, the peacebuilding community is struggling to provide evidence of the continued relevance of their interventions. The combination of highly political and power-based military conflicts within complex emergencies creates an intervention context that lends itself to high-level political and military engagement, and to humanitarian assistance. The space for peacebuilding, and even development intervention, seems to be shrinking, albeit for different reasons. In this paper the continued validity of peacebuilding within the intervention toolbox in Africa is interrogated.

Critiques of peacebuilding have generally fallen within one of two categories – those critical of programming and impact but still believing that these flaws can be cured through increased expertise, technical skills and improved operationalisation and those critical of the conceptual validity of peacebuilding as a function of the power dynamics of the liberal world order. This paper develops a critique of peacebuilding that is rooted in the contextual challenges of the concept and its operationalisation; it is a concept rooted in a particular logic of intervention and its operationalisation occurs within a particular context of conflict. Thus the paper questions whether peacebuilding still has relevance within the dynamics of current conflict systems in Africa. For the purposes of this paper, conflict in Africa is characterised by external engagement, the building of states, the liberal peace paradigm, the experience of individual and collective rights, and patronage and closed networks of power. It is argued that within these parameters peacebuilding is of limited use if it cannot engage with the radical restructuring of political and economic power, especially the ability of individuals to exercise their political and economic rights.

The origins of peacebuilding as part of external intervention

Peacebuilding is often cited as having its origins in Boutros Boutros Ghali's 1992 *An Agenda for Peace*. However, efforts to build peace through international intervention are better rooted in the League of Nations. Woodrow Wilson pronounced on 8 January 1919 that 'For the first time in history the counsels of mankind are to be drawn together and concerted for the purpose of ... improving the conditions of working people – men, women and children – all over the world'.¹ This was a world of colonialism and racism, which created international mandates to assist 'helpless people' through exercising 'authority over them during their period of development'.² While the Treaty of Versailles recognised the need for intervention to assist people to improve their lived experience, the US and UK blocked efforts from Japan to include a clause recognising the equality of all people, hence the helplessness of people and the requirement for intervention.

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These attitudes carried through into the United Nations. It is often overlooked that Jan Smuts, the then South African prime minister, was one of the primary authors of the UN Charter. Smuts saw the UN as serving 'men and women everywhere, including dependent peoples, still unable to look after themselves'.³ Such attitudes continue to dominate intervention rhetoric, particularly in post-conflict scenarios, although today it is more frequently expressed in the guise of technical capacity. Jordan Ryan, Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery at the UN Development Programme (UNDP), gave this telling example during an online debate in 2014: 'Support is required to enable the state and political society to manage the debate and share power, including economic decision-making power. Over time, and with support, capacity will become institutionalised – including in constitutions, elections, parliaments, rule-of-law bodies and civil society organizations. By transforming the underlying political and social dynamics which fuel violence, and by focusing on improving the interface between the state and its people, we will truly address the causes of fragility'.⁴

For over a hundred years support has been given to African states for the transformation of political and social dynamics, to assist with economic decision-making and to manage the interface between the state and its people. Even in the absence of a record of successful intervention, instead of decreasing ambitions, the weight of expectation placed on intervention in the present age as a means of reordering is historically unprecedented.⁵ The number of international staff of UN agencies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, international non-governmental organisations, faith-based groups and bilateral agencies, as well as students, volunteers, mercenaries and investors far exceeds that ever known before. Colonialism may have aimed for such penetration of territories, economies and peoples, but this has only been realised in the modern, globalised African state. And whereas the aims of intervention in the early 19th and early 20th centuries may have borne a different relationship in view of the extent of abuse at the hands of external oppressors, they share frightening commonalities in treating the 'native' as a threat that needs to be addressed and managed as they cannot help themselves. This establishes a long-term trend towards enabling autocratic governance.

The continued relevance of the liberal world order seems to rest on the validity of the conventional wisdom that state authority, multilateralism and free market economic growth are the ingredients for a more peaceful world

The reasons for this commonality are quite simple: the interests of the interveners, while changing in language and doctrine, have remained fundamentally concerned with the security and prosperity of the global hierarchy – a hierarchy whose political expression is in the state and whose economic mode is capital. Strong, vibrant and wealthy states sit at the top end of indices while weak, poorly organised and underdeveloped states grasp the bottom rungs of quantitative orderings. While the strong states a century ago were the havens of white privilege, their demographics have changed fundamentally and their behaviour patterns have become stagnant, conservative, protectionist and defensive.

However, instead of viewing those geographies of violence as areas unable to adapt and having lost out to the norms of the state and global capital, these 'fragile' states are rather seen as arenas ripe for tutelage so that they may manage the outbursts

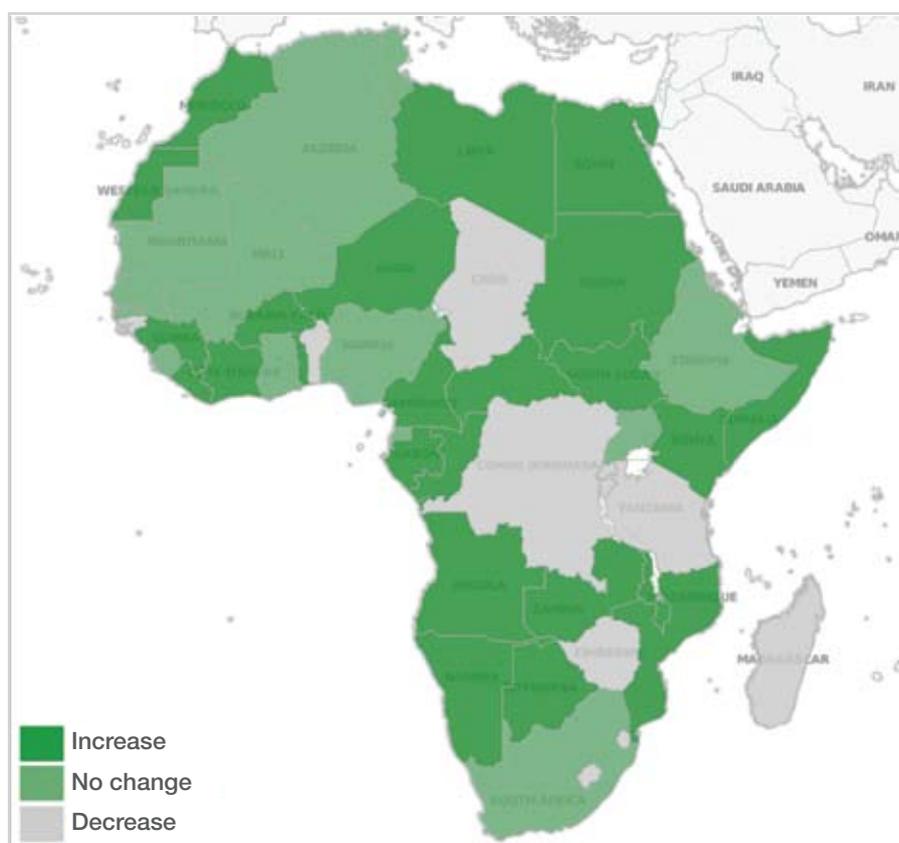
of the unaccommodated less disruptively and in this way halt the demographic invasion that is changing the face of the first world. This echoes earlier attitudes towards the 'helpless' and 'dependent peoples', and the management of surplus populations that do not benefit from the ordering of the world in controllable state units, and the progress of humankind in material wealth and financial wellbeing. It is these peripheral populations that are still viewed as a threat to be managed, contained and reformed.

While democratic governance may be an intention of modern intervention, its weight in actuality lies alongside its ability to regulate the disruptive impacts of violence. Unfortunately, in as much as hierarchies of political and economic power can accommodate a democratic character, hierarchical governance often finds expression in authoritarian and autocratic regimes. Such regimes make useful partners because they are capable of rational, technocratic, central planning and are able to implement programming that orders and controls their populations. Ethiopia, the DRC, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Egypt are choice international partners not because of the rights-based approaches of their governments.⁶ In a historical analysis of intervention, John MacMillan notes that a significant factor in the demise of military intervention 'has been the rise of rational-bureaucratic forms of power which are more appropriate for the complex tasks and collaborative nature of much international ordering activity'.⁷

Peacebuilding and the problems of statehood

The continuing relevance of the liberal world order seems to rest on the validity of the conventional wisdom that state authority, multilateralism and free market economic growth, underpinned by modernising tendencies that break down traditional authority, culture and custom, are the ingredients for achieving a more peaceful world. Yet these ingredients are generating increasingly complex crises within an interdependent world. In Africa, current conflicts are very much a continuation of the crises of modernisation that have characterised politics since the colonial era. In some countries, the trends driving conflict seem as unstoppable as ever. Even in historically peaceful Tanzania, the fracture between modernising the political system towards multi-party democracy, institutionalisation, and controlling executive power is being resisted by powerful patronage networks that see their hold on power in zero-sum terms. Conflict and competition in Africa continue to be about resisting the non-partisan institutionalisation of the monopoly of violence and the accumulation of fiscal responsibility in the state – by both those who control and who oppose the state.

Figure 1: Conflict increase, decrease and no change across Africa, 2012 – 2013



Source: ACLED, Conflict Trends No.22, January 2014, www.acled.com

The new autocracies

While the practices of democracy, mostly measured in terms of elections and representation, have become increasingly common on the continent, the translation of election outcomes into changes in the political power structure are less frequent and tangible. In many countries the liberation movements of old continue to dominate the political space, with majority ruling parties able to cling to power for decades or ‘until Jesus comes’, as President Zuma of the African National Congress in South Africa has said.⁸ If democratic channels are not capable of delivering change within ruling systems whose origins are rooted in violence, the use of violence remains a means to shape the political environment.

As shown on the map, the trend in Africa is towards an increase in levels of political violence in contrast to the non-violent management of competition within democratic regimes.⁹ These figures also show trends towards a dramatic increase in riots and protests that turn violent (more than 60% in 2013) and sustained high levels of civilian targeting by states (27,4% of all violent incidents). While categories of violent group activities increased – i.e. by all groups of actors involved in violence – the activity of rebel groups on the continent showed the smallest rate of increase, ‘underscoring the ongoing eclipse of civil wars on the continent by elite sponsored militia activity which does not seek to overthrow national regimes, but has rather found means to shape the existing political system through the programmatic use of violence’.¹⁰ Violence retains its importance as a means for ordering; creating, sustaining and changing the obligations and exercise of power.



THE TREND IN AFRICA IS TOWARDS AN INCREASE IN LEVELS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN CONTRAST TO THE NON-VIOLENT MANAGEMENT OF COMPETITION WITHIN DEMOCRATIC REGIMES

Central to the ability to mobilise for violence are rapidly escalating population numbers as young people around the continent seek to live different lives in different ways. Whereas it took 64 000 years for the world to reach its first billion human inhabitants in the 1820s, the seventh billion came about in just 11 years from 2000 to 2011.¹¹ And this growth is not taking place in the protected, prosperous safe havens of elitism in the first world, but rather in the complicated, congested and expansive spaces of the third world. Across the continent youth population figures are soaring and with them massive expectation gaps, frustrations and energies for change are being generated. Unfortunately, where these energies cannot find positive change avenues, the overwhelming presence of small arms on the continent, ever present grievances and identity-based motivations combine to create a pool of youth easy to mobilise for activism of a more violent nature. From the service delivery protests in South Africa to election-related violence in Kenya and Zimbabwe, extremism in northern Mali and Nigeria, and armed groups in Libya, Somalia and South Sudan, youth around the continent are learning that politics in Africa is not a competition of ideas, but an often violent struggle to get what you want.

In addition, while the acceptance of state boundaries created by the colonial authorities may have spared African peoples the violent legacies of inter-state warfare, it created an inter-state political dynamic in which both local and international actors use proxies as the principal means to project power. Coupled with the weakness of state institutions and the fact that politics is often conducted through networks of obligation, this fragmented political authority remains stable only as long as the generation and allocation of patronage resources remains stable.¹² This means also that ambitious leaders of rival factions are always able to appropriate resources and build their own patronage networks, turning when necessary to the readily available youth, militias and proxy forces able to further their cause.¹³

Ambitious leaders of rival factions are always able to appropriate resources and build their own patronage networks

The current dilemma for peacebuilding and intervention more broadly is that within this context, there is an increasing slide towards autocracy within ruling regimes in order to control the challenges to their hold on political and economic power. While some may disagree about the level of autocracy currently characterising governance in Africa, there remains a common

history of autocratic rule. One of its legacies is the inability of capital to extend beyond the control of the state, which means that those with the power to suppress also have the means and incentives to suppress. Even in more stable countries, such as Ethiopia, South Africa, Angola, Uganda, Rwanda and Botswana, state-run enterprises, party-affiliated investment firms and elite-centred private sector development dominate the economic landscape.

New institutions of the state and new avenues for partnership provide opportunities for predation and extraversion

The lack of opportunity to build significant commercial interests outside the centrally controlled state means that there is a considerable block to developing a commercial class able to demand checks on the use of power by leadership. This, in turn, also implies that there is little incentive for governments to undertake significant reform, to share wealth or to be more accountable to their citizens. Co-option tends to be easy and there is an interesting ability to sustain power and survive despite large scandals, crippling bureaucratic inefficiencies and often-brutal security crackdowns. This results largely from the fact that the strength of the state does not come from the strength of independent institutions. Examples can be drawn from Nigeria, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Eritrea where there is congruity between the strength of survival of ruling regimes and the weaknesses of their independent institutions. There is an interdependency between extreme economic inequality and political capture – functioning within and through global and national institutions.¹⁴

Part of the reason for this is that while institutions may be fragile (and often purposefully weak), elite interests are particularly adept at survival as they have the means and the opportunities to navigate change and shore up their resilience to harm. New institutions of the state and new avenues for partnership just provide opportunities for predation and extraversion.¹⁵ These possibilities not only provide for less local accountability but offer few incentives for behavioural change as the interests of international partners are diverse and elites are often able to play these off against each other successfully and exploit them for their own benefit. Particularly in terms of the current East–West standoff on the continent, Western donors are even more constrained in their use of conditionality or the withholding of aid to leverage behavioural change. Coupled with the need to contain extremism, which is made more urgent by recent

terror attacks in Paris and Brussels, and the increasing threat of radicalisation within developed states, elites with legitimacy and liberal democracy deficits are able to secure large-scale support to build the institutions of the state, often even the coercive powers of the state.

Peacebuilding creates an imperative within intervention beyond merely alleviating immediate suffering or ending conflict, but to re-engineer entire societies

It is these same coercive powers that can then be turned against the citizens of the state when required, as has been the case in Egypt, or used to further state predation by ousting rebel or foreign groups, as has occurred in the DRC and may be occurring in Somalia. The Somalia example is interesting as the weakness of the state has created a situation in which African Union (AU) forces have been able to oust al-Shabaab in some areas and the external contributing countries have taken over the exploitative political and economic networks, such as through supporting local militia and seizing control of the charcoal export industry in Kismayo. Thus when peacebuilding is concerned with building the institutions of the state, it can become involved in the provision of space for illiberal practices to flourish.

Peacebuilding and the liberal peace paradigm

For peacebuilding to be concerned with building a liberal peace, it needs to re-engage with the rights of the individual, controls on the use of state power – domestically and internationally – and the pursuit of inclusive economic growth. Peacebuilding creates an imperative within intervention beyond merely alleviating immediate suffering or ending a current conflict but to re-engineer entire societies; to radically re-shape the evolutionary processes through which institutions and norms spontaneously emerge and adapt; and to subvert the energies that could manifest as violence. International interventions, including peacebuilding, are increasingly occurring in contexts where action is required to uphold the credibility of a system of governance that was supposed to obviate war in the first place. Order, as expressed in a state with a settled population, a centralised sovereign authority and governed by a set of rules and norms, was destined to avert the anarchic ‘state of nature’ so feared by Hobbesians. It is a fear still recognisable in security discourses today. Fear of what can be bred and exported from places of anarchy still send shudders from countries such as Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and northern Mali to powerful capitals thousands of miles away: the threat of disorder, the threat of the non-state. But such visions ignore the fact that the dominant forms of violence still being experienced in Africa today are not about a lack of sovereign authority but about the ability of those assuming power to violate the rights of private individuals with impunity.

In a post-9/11 world it has become even easier to hide illiberal processes within a liberal world order. Unipolarity, the right of states to use coercion against individuals for the right reasons, the Five’s veto powers over international peace and security, the exclusive nature of global capitalism, and a view that underdevelopment has become dangerous, are not characteristics of a liberal world. Indeed, any political order in which violence against an individual is justified to serve collective ends cannot be regarded as a liberal political order. If we understand a political order not by its sources but by its effects, the manifestations of current liberal world order are increasing



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inequality, growing state intrusion on the rights of the individual, ever greater encroachment on the boundaries of sovereignty and a loss of incentive for non-violent protest. There are three important characteristics of liberal politics which should be constantly emphasised if there is to be a reinvigoration of the ambitions of a liberal world order: the primacy of the individual as *a priori* to the political, an international system defined by restraint, reciprocity and sovereign equality, and cooperation for mutual gain.¹⁶

The advancement of individual rights

Much of the violence currently experienced in Africa is related to the subjugation of the individual to the collective – functioning both at national and international levels. Collective values fulfil a protective purpose in a lawless world, creating a sense of order in the absence of formal laws and systems.¹⁷ But collective values also create an important distinction between those within and those outside the group. Those within have little responsibility to trust or tolerate those outside.¹⁸ In addition to creating a barrier to cooperation, when the individual exists merely to serve the purposes of a higher collective – a tribe, nation or state – a disregard for the rights of the individual follows naturally. Interesting examples can be found in interethnic violence in the Horn of Africa that is commonly associated with collective responsibility for the exercise of violence as well as for the repercussions thereof. Similarly, the individual rights of black South Africans during apartheid were secondary to the collective rights of the democratic regimes seeking to resist communist expansion in Africa, hence the lack of UN Security Council intervention in South Africa during that period.

Moving from the prioritisation of the collective to the individual is the essential foundation of a liberal world order as neither the vision of an international system defined by restraint, reciprocity and sovereign equality, nor the notion of cooperation for mutual gain can be manifested when individual rights are hostage to political interests that operate in a hierarchy of power. The lack of liberalism in the current world order means that indignation is misplaced when there is no international (or national) outcry over thousands who die in Nigeria, but 12 persons killed in Paris leads to an outpouring of solidarity. Likewise, there can be no notion of mutual gain when the rights of pastoral communities are less than those of elites seeking to exploit their land for nature conservation, oil exploration or as a private hunting facility for the Saudi royal family. The international system cannot function liberally when individual rights are not awarded equally. This is the hypocrisy at the heart of the liberal world order – the liberal nature of this order is known only to those with the money and power to experience it.

Those who benefit from liberalism on a global scale are often the states that have managed to secure the transition from the collective to the individual domestically. At the national level, such transformation is an important part of the state formation process that most fundamentally seeks to make society legible. Orderliness depends on the recognition and management of its component parts. Thus, for example, transferring land ownership from the collective to the individual as part of a system for organising and cataloguing the accumulation of personal wealth is an important part of developing a system of taxation, which is one of the primary duties of the state. The state seeks to make legible its citizenry: to know the identities, location and assets of its subjects as the basis for organising, monitoring and managing them. This is ultimately a process of sedentarisation and creating permanent, predictable and controllable citizens.

This process of essentialist, rationalizing modernisation appeals to the liberal and autocrat alike, making it no surprise that the assumptions underlying the interventions of the colonial era bear a striking resemblance to those of the independent, more legitimate and often more socialist African states.¹⁹ It also explains why China functions as a collective through a high degree of control of the individual. Surnames, identity numbers, the registration of births and the need to provide proof of address when obtaining a SIM card are all processes aimed at making people visible and legible. They are the foundation for establishing control and is the functional movement from collective to individual identity.

There can be no notion of mutual gain when the rights of pastoral communities are less than those of elites

Herein lies the great challenge of modern statecraft in Africa: not only is the logic of the legibility of the state units questionable but there are significant factors enabling the resistance of further shifts towards legibility within the state. These could include the benefits of collective risk management in rural societies, and areas where formalised institutional processes cannot provide predictability and order, such as those that depend on traditional justice owing to the absence of a formal justice sector or legitimacy. Other factors that continue to uphold collective values include geography, economics, history and culture, in addition to the tensions resulting from modernisation, the clash of cultures and inter-generational conflict. The interesting paradox in the globalising world is that increased interaction should bring greater appreciation of and empathy for

‘The Other’, as well as the development of new transnational identities. But this occurs concurrently with the preservation of differences as exposure to the outside world is both a source of marvel and fear.

Unfortunately, the state’s quest for a more transparent society is not generating greater individual rights, but increased control of the individual is subverting existing rights with a consequent slide towards autocracy. For ruling regimes, seeking to control populations and make them legible does not necessarily result in a realisation of individual rights but rather often continues to favour and reinforce tendencies towards the collective denial of rights and the avoidance of individual accountability. It is easier to control individuals if an entire group has curtailments on their rights. An interesting example can be drawn from responses to homosexuality on the continent, where an individual presents such a threat to traditional collective values that the rights of a whole group is curtailed. Similarly, focusing on collective identities and rights means that priorities are determined by the accrual of benefit to the group interests, thus circumventing personal accountability. Networks of obligation and patronage depend on collective growth and, as anti-corruption efforts have shown, individual accountability does not necessarily dilute systemic behavioural incentives. Collective obligation – be it through ethnicity, geography, history or force – keeps the powerful in power. The legacy of the state in Africa is as a source of power to control the people and not as something that is trusted to protect the people. The interruption of processes in which authority would have been institutionalised (i.e. political evolution)²⁰ has resulted in the creation of political systems in which there is a disassociation of power from authority characterised by a lack of inter-group trust. Whoever is in charge of the state is assumed to favour the interests of their own to the detriment of the others. This is an inherently autocratic entity, which often comes to power through violence and yet is often met with an unrealistic expectation of future benevolence.

Peacebuilding, patronage and power

Maintaining the power of the collective is an important function in the maintenance of the status quo. An interesting paradox about political power is that the more diffused it becomes, the more difficult it is to exercise. This leads to two somewhat contradictory outcomes when attempting to reconfigure political power. The first is a trend towards advanced systems of patronage to maintain control, with or without the guise of democratic behaviour. The second is a trend towards the mutation of patronage networks into post-statist networks of control over territory and markets (such as warlordism, clan-based networks of control and the hybridisation of authority). While the configurations and practices of power may differ, the outcomes are largely the same, especially in terms of individual rights. In both cases, the opening of political space means that governments are increasingly being forced into formal and informal power-sharing coalitions that provide a superficial check on abuses of power while diluting the ability to take action on the overriding strategic priorities outside the status quo.

For example, it is commonly recognised that civil society is weak in many African states, especially in those states emerging from conflict. Supporting civil society engagement through capacity building, organisational development and piecemeal funding is a common peacebuilding practice, and is most common in places where the international community is trying to bypass the state apparatus. This approach fails to recognise some important limitations on what civil society is and what it can achieve. Firstly, there is no dichotomy between the state and civil society in most African



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contexts.²¹ Civil society is thought to have some heuristic method to offset hegemonic power through representation and inclusivity, with vibrant groups of dissenters able to represent the views of the majority of the population. This implies that social groups have the capacity to come together and organise politically above and beyond existing cleavages such as ethnicity, urban–rural, wealth, religion, etc. However, civil society as such would need to be able to transcend the dominant values and create a new set of collective values and endorsed behaviour outside of kith and kin.

Powerful ruling regimes are not proving to be fragile to change, but rather entrenched and creatively resistant to the diffusion of their power

However, African societies are not composed of 'discrete individuals detached from their communal environment'.²² This in part explains why the most dominant civil society groups are often urban and has a leadership educated outside the country, be it in refugee camps or otherwise. Civil society in this case is short of representation but has a basis beyond its communal environment. It also means that while civil society can in some cases organise to protest government behaviour, it can shake the leaves but is unable to shake the roots. And those that shake the leaves can easily be pushed aside.

Second, if we accept that the state in Africa is weak and lacks institutionalisation, then civil society cannot be envisaged as being a counterbalance to the strong state. With politics operating through vertical relationships inside and outside of the formal structures, civil society organisations will often be part of the network that links elites to society. Thus it is not uncommon to find members of government heading up civil society groups that are implementing service delivery projects funded by donors, or the wives of chiefs leading women's associations and local politicians enflaming anti-government protest. Thus, while support for civil society to check government power may theoretically promote the diffusion of power within advanced networks of obligation, patronage systems and vertical hierarchies, these are easily subverted to the will of the existing configurations of power. Taken together, these two points mean that while it is possible to change politics through civil action, there needs to be far greater ideological depth to transcend the dominant value system and more protection of the rights of associated individuals (for example, the freedom of journalists and activists).

A similar example applies to building decentralised states: decentralisation enables flexibility and responsiveness in decision-making if there is devolution of power, but building a state requires the centralisation of absolute power. Especially in large territories with heterogeneous populations, decentralised units are more like mutually exclusive ethnic hierarchies and spaces for visible political accommodation into patronage politics. While in an advanced state centres of power on the peripheries could be pillars of stability, in a state of disorder, they can threaten the allocation and distribution of power, breeding accommodation and incompetence. This will further dilute the positive exercise of political power and lead to ineffective service delivery at local government level. This dynamic is sustained by the increasing focus of donor agendas on local government in a drive that seeks to offset the accumulation of power and inefficiencies in the centre. Decentralisation and local government development that rely on the cooption of local elites merely reinforces existing power relations. The chance of sustainable development or service delivery being an outcome of the confluence of these dynamics will be more due to mutual interest being served than design.

At the top, power is increasingly centralised in the former liberation movements that still cling to their identities and ideas of decades gone by, as well as powerful political parties who are close to the state. The level of resistance to change is probably greater than ever before. From Zimbabwe to Uganda, Kenya, Guinea Bissau, Tanzania, South Africa, Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Botswana and Sudan powerful ruling regimes are not proving to be fragile to change, but rather entrenched and creatively resistant to the diffusion of their power and the challenge to their distributive networks. A key way in which power is sustained is through advanced networks of elite accommodation and the ability to draw in potential opponents and rivals, and bind them to patronage networks. Sustaining these networks is increasingly reliant on external relationships of capital, commerce and coercion. Further lessons from recent experience in Libya also indicates that the dramatic reform of a central authority does not necessarily open the space for the emergence of civil groups, liberal political ideas and a more peaceful society. On a less violent level, examples can be drawn from leadership changes within political parties, such as in Ethiopia post-Meles, the South African change from Mbeki to Zuma, and the election of Ian Khama in Botswana. Rather than a space being provided for more liberal politics to emerge, the tendency is for a multiplicity of existing rival factions to occupy that space. Coupled with the ideological dearth already in existence, this almost guarantees that these factions will be of the same or worse ilk than their predecessors.

A call for a renewed commitment to rights

If current trends prevail, future conflicts in Africa will be about the collective denial of individual rights in order to maintain and extend current configurations of power – within and outside the state. Peacebuilding is not useful if it fails to engage systematically with the harbingers of violence. These harbingers are the effects of inequality, prolonged and sustained through networks of obligation within patronage-based political systems that encourage the ambitious to harness localised grievances amid sustained conditions of impoverishment, and translate these into violence. This calls for a return to ideology as the basis for political action, the development of political and economic positions by rebels and governments alike, and the development within populations of the type of political activism that decades ago created the liberation movements that are currently empowered to plunder at will. It means harnessing youth energy for change, turning the urban slums of Africa into the virtual factory floor of Marxism a century ago, and using the tools of modernisation to break down patronage networks that no longer serve the good of the people.²³

Our primary concern at the moment should be that through intervention and the states that are being created, we are merely reinforcing the inequalities and systemic denial of rights

But this view is easily dismissed as a modern leftist ideologue's perspective; the perspective of the creative rebel who believes that economic justice may one day mean something, knowing that if it does not the decades of violence that are our history have only laid the foundation for the massive exploitation of our economic development in the future. This is a belief in a utopia whose relevance echoes in the social consciousness of the millions of disenfranchised, dispossessed and marginalised. The peacebuilding community has tended to avoid such discussions about poverty, inequality and the fallacies of improving the human condition through monetary means, probably to avoid being labelled socialist and to stay within the overall dictates of the donor community. But by doing so they 'runs a real risk of being complicit in the maintenance of the current, unsustainable global system'.²⁴ Without a utopian vision of what equal rights could actually look like, peacebuilding fails to generate ideas of change and merely enables the continuation of the conservative, increasingly fragile, status quo.

The less radical alternative call would be for private sector investment, entrepreneurial growth and market-oriented development in pursuit of the view that markets and people can independently solve their problems given an enabling environment. While the liberal market economy perspective is actually a conservative approach geared towards affirming existing conditions, it could provide avenues for change – albeit of the same vein as Western development trajectories. The common perspective is that preventing future conflicts means creating an environment that supports creative problem-solving, innovation and transformation.²⁵ The common points being that avenues for access to resources need to change, people need to exercise more control over their lives, and that through a spreading of resources, inequalities can be levelled and accountability enhanced.

Regardless of ideological persuasion, our primary concern at the moment should be that through intervention and the states that are being created, we are merely reinforcing the inequalities and systemic denial of rights that have historically caused conflict. If the aim



THERE CAN BE NO TALK OF PEACE UNTIL THERE ARE STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS THAT PROTECT AND ADVANCE THE RIGHTS OF THE POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY WEAK IN THE SAME MANNER AS THOSE OF THE POWERFUL AND WEALTHY

of peacebuilding is to enable powerful states and transnational capital to assert their dominance over the world order more amicably, then the peacebuilding community is being quite successful. However, if long-term structural change is the goal, then we are failing rather miserably. The reality is that international actors are palpably weak and ineffective as peacebuilders and make poor partners for their local colleagues who face the heat of often violent and protracted conflict and oppression.²⁶

At the moment political leadership in many African states is showing less and less concern for sharing the gains of economic growth than for maintaining the power of the purse strings. Until that changes, we may as well signal the end of peacebuilding. Until security and prosperity are not awarded based on patronage and servitude, there can be no talk of peace. There can be no talk of peace until there are structures and institutions that protect and advance the rights of the politically and economically weak in the same manner as those of the powerful and wealthy. At both national and international levels the double standard of rights that reinforce resource accumulation in certain pockets needs to be overcome, even if that means structurally altering the world as we know it; reverting to some combination of collective socialist action seeking radical liberal outcomes. Neither peacebuilders nor aid practitioners are able to bestow rights on people and the arrogance of the intervener merely bestows a fraudulent and temporary empowerment. Real rights come from real change, and if political leadership does not provide avenues for change the ground remains ripe for those who seeks to force change through violence both at home and abroad.

Notes

- 1 W Easterly, *The Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor*, USA: Basic Books, 2013, 43 – 44.
- 2 Ibid., 48–49.
- 3 Ibid., 96.
- 4 J Ryan, Sequencing for stability, Online debate hosted Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law, 24 February 2014, www.kpsrl.org/online-debate/online-debate-item/t/sequencing-for-stability-blog-post-3-by-jordan-ryan-director-bureau-for-crisis-prevention-and-recovery-undp.
- 5 J MacMillan, Intervention and the ordering of the modern world, *Review of International Studies*, 39, 5 December 2013, 1042.
- 6 Ethiopia is the largest single recipient of international aid in Africa followed by the DRC, Tanzania, Kenya, the Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt and Uganda. See Organisation for Economic Development, 2014, www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/2.%20Africa%20-%20Development%20Aid%20at%20a%20Glance%202014.pdf. Accessed 2 January 2015.
- 7 J MacMillan, Intervention and the ordering of the modern world, *Review of International Studies*, 39, 5 December 2013, 1054. MacMillan also points out that military intervention happens most frequently in countries where development agencies have not had a substantial presence. According to him, the threat of military intervention in terms of peacekeeping, direct engagement or through proxies decreases in relation to the degree of a state's acceptance of structure in its political economy as dictated by global powers.
- 8 'We will continue to run this government forever and ever. Whether they [the detractors] like it or not,' President Zuma was quoted as telling ANC supporters in Zulu on 8 January 2014. SAPA-AFP, Zuma: The ANC will rule till Jesus comes back, *Mail & Guardian*, 8 January 2014, mg.co.za/article/2014-01-08-zuma-the-anc-will-rule-forever.
- 9 Real time analysis of African political violence, Armed Conflict Location and Event Database, *Conflict Trends* 22, <http://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ACLED-Conflict-Trends-Report-No-22-January-2014.pdf>.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 D Dorling, *Population 10 Billion: the coming demographic crisis and how to survive it*, 2013, London, Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2013, 104 – 151.
- 12 W Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 244.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 R Fuentes-Nieva and N Galasso, *Working for the few: political capture and economic inequality*, Oxfam Briefing Paper 178, Oxford: Oxfam, 20 January 2014. This paper also provides some frightening statistics that indicate how much is at stake as regards economic distribution for those in power. For example, almost half of the world's wealth is controlled by just 1% of the world's population; seven out of 10 people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the past 30 years; and in the US, the wealthiest 1% of the population has captured 95% of post-financial crisis growth since 2009, while the bottom 90% of the population has become poorer.
- 15 J F Bayart, Africa in the world: a history of extraversion, *African Affairs*, 99, April 2000, 217–267.
- 16 T Dunne and T Flockhart (eds.), *Liberal World Orders*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- 17 W Easterly, *The Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor*, USA: Basic Books, 2013, 133 – 134.
- 18 Ibid., 135.
- 19 See, for example, discussion on colonial and post-colonial agricultural policies in East Africa in J C Scott, *Seeing like a state: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, 223 – 261.
- 20 Samuel Huntington made the argument that political authority needs to exist before it can be limited and that the precondition for political liberty is political stability as expressed in effective and authoritative institutions. Thus, his belief in the value of authoritarian governments as part of the modernisation process. This line of thinking still resonates today in the belief in benevolent dictators and the benefits of a certain amount of autocracy to instil order. However, I could counter that current experience indicates that when political and economic power become centralised in the ruling autocracy, there are few incentives to pursue liberty unless forced to do so, and even fewer in the modern era where there are multiple sources of external support to shore up internal legitimacy deficits. See S Huntington, *Political order in changing societies*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.
- 21 P Chabal and J Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, Oxford: James Currey, 1999, 17.
- 22 Ibid., 19.
- 23 W Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 254.
- 24 S Fisher and L Zimina, *Just wasting our time? Provocative thoughts for peacebuilders*, Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2009, 19.
- 25 See G Mills, *Why states recover: changing walking states into winning nations from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe*, Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2014.
- 26 S Fisher and L Zimina, *Just wasting our time? Provocative thoughts for peacebuilders*, Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2009, 27.

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