

Making a Case for Reframing Narratives of Peacebuilding in Africa

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Framing Paper

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INTRODUCTION

The elusive search for stable peace continues to consume the attention of local and international society, not least the United Nations. The problem of *conflict relapse* is perhaps the biggest dilemma faced by conflict resolution mechanism of the United Nations and regional organisations alike. About half of the situations of conflict and insecurity on the agenda of the UN Security Council in recent times are of situations where huge investments had previously been made in the pursuit of peace.¹ More than two-thirds of those cases of relapse are of conflict situations in Africa.² The conflict and security terrain in Africa has transmuted significantly in the last two decades such that agendas and architectures devised for peace have been blunted by new conflict dynamics. All of this has generated an even more critical look at the global peace architecture and its application in Africa.

This paper interrogates common and established understanding and application of peacebuilding in Africa. It argues that Africa's experiences thus far, suggest an alternative narrative and pathway toward building inherently peaceful and viable states. Current approaches to peacebuilding rely on a dominant narrative that constructs a particular model of state as a prerequisite to sustainable peace. As such, interventions in societies affected by armed conflict focus on the transfer of a model that is expected to lead to peace and stability. This approach, which sees African states, as they ought to be rather than as they actually are, is inherently flawed. First, rarely does the dominant discourse of peacebuilding construe the outbreaks of intractable conflicts, which sometimes, and paradoxically, threaten the very survival of African states, and the efforts to reconcile society, as part of a continuum of *conversation* inherent in state making and state-building processes. Yet in many cases, those conflicts are the products of intractable disagreements that are fundamental to the process of state building internal to the affected societies. Second and related, peacebuilding interventions are invariably guided by particular notions of "peace" and of the "state" held by the interveners, which undermine prospects for stable peace in these contexts. Those

notions of peace and models of state are often not realizable in contexts and times quite different from the ones in which they were developed. It is assumed that an end to violence and a sustaining of stable peace can be achieved by creating a particular type of state, which has been tried and tested elsewhere.

This paper therefore argues that the pursuit of peace should be conceived as part of the *conversations* inherent in, and underpinning state building processes rather than a particular model of statehood and its institutional infrastructure. In this regard, many situations of armed conflict in post-independence and post-Cold War Africa are the result of *conversations*, violent or otherwise, taking place between various segments of society in the specific national contexts. And those conversations might require a distinctly different solution, process or time frame from the models currently offered in the response by interveners or leading actors. Arguably, any attempt to build stable peace must return to those conversations rather than short-circuit them through the imposition of particular models of state building in ways that do not take into account the nature and content of the conversations that occurred before those societies slid into violence. As such, the logic of peacebuilding is to be found not in a pre-determined model of state building but in the interaction occurring within the target state, among elite and between elite and society. The nature and the form that these state building conversations assume will be part of the focus of this paper.

In pursuit of this argument, this paper addresses itself to two key questions: First, how relevant are the dominant narratives of peacebuilding to the African experience? Second, to what extent do common types of political and peace settlements create opportunities for a return to the state building conversations that predate armed conflict? The terms, *political settlement* and *peace settlement* are used interchangeably. Two types of peace settlements form the focus of attention here – those that ended in victory on the battlefield for one party and defeat for other(s); and those that were the result of negotiated settlement. Does one type of settlement accommodate pre-war conversations about state building? Is sustainable peace more discernable as a result? This paper cites and discusses a number of conflict situations in Africa, which ended through different forms of political settlements as illustrative examples. It makes a distinction between two main types of violent and armed conflict settings. The first consists of those

situations of armed conflict where violence ended on the battlefield such as Ethiopia and Rwanda. The second includes situations where the end of violence as well as post-conflict agenda was negotiated and facilitated either internally or by external interveners such as the United Nations or regional organisations. Somaliland is an example of a largely internally facilitated settlement while South Sudan is an example of an externally facilitated one. An examination of these settings might enable one make better sense of the trajectories of various peacebuilding approaches and the extent to which they help to set conflict affected societies on the course of nation and state building in ways that produce stable peace.

This paper is organised in five further sections following this introduction. The second discusses the dominant narratives of peace and relevance for Africa. The third presents the notion of *conversation*, its underlying features and assumptions and its potential as a pathway to building and sustaining peace in Africa. The fourth examines some illustrative examples of political/ peace settlements in Africa and their connection to the dominant and alternative narratives. The fifth and final section offers some concluding remarks.

DOMINANT NARRATIVES OF PEACE AND RELEVANCE FOR AFRICA

With few exceptions, much of the oft-cited ideas and discourses on the pursuit of peace are Western in origin. Dominant ideas of war and peace have evolved from classical to 20th Century philosophers and writers. To varying degrees, these ideas are now embedded in the strategies for peace in societies that were not even remotely in the consideration of those shaping political thought and ideas of peace across those periods. Thomas Hobbes was pre-occupied by the events in England (the English civil war must not have been far from his mind) when he was writing about the original “state of nature” and the perils of the struggle for individual power. For Hobbes, ideally, the state or commonwealth – his *Leviathan* – created from popular consent, would safeguard peace. The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 would come to settle the central question of the state’s *sovereignty*. John Locke, writing a few decades after Hobbes, reflected on the need to check the powers of the state by dividing its core functions between legislative and executive branches. It was essential, to preserve the natural rights of human beings, derived from God-

given, Natural Law. In that *Age of Enlightenment*, which was also a period of social upheaval and industrial revolution, Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that less importance should be accorded to the right of individuals given that the wealthy could maintain unequal power and privilege under the guise of equal rights to attain that status. Instead, the idea of the *Social Contract* ensures that the rights of the individual are subsumed in the *general will* for the pursuit of the collective wellbeing, the “common good”.

Such contestation of ideas, and debate about what ought to constitute valid knowledge and future direction amid changing situations and changeable human condition is critical to the growth and development of every society. There is much to be learned from these European ideas and experiences. Arguably, the quest for stable peace and justice and the desire of every human being to reach her or his full potential in a peaceful, certainly prosperous society is universal and holds true across time and space. What has held true for the people of Europe and America for centuries (for which written records are widely available) is also true for the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This is so, even if for many of these recent and developing states, contestations about the governing of life in common have yet to produce a settled frame around which to build their collective future. However, the cautionary thread that runs through this paper is that the pursuit of ideals of stable peace that are universally sought cannot be interchanged with models of governance deemed to be universally transferrable across time and space.

While many societies may have settled the issue of the governance models best suited to their situations, the escalation of conflict to armed and destructive levels remains a real challenge globally. The search for stable peace, between and within states, has undergone major evolution in the last century, throwing up theories and strategies for peace that offer much insight even if they cannot be adopted wholesale in other contexts. Here, particular focus is placed first, on the evolutions of the ideas of peace as shaped by Immanuel Kant and Johan Galtung; and second, on the dominant approach to peacebuilding in war-affected societies since the 1990s.

Kant’s notion of *perpetual peace* required a permanent end to war between states. It meant going beyond reaching a mere truce or temporary cessation of

hostilities between the armies of sovereign states. Continuous peace between sovereign states would be realised only when those states ceased to be controlled by rulers for whom the people were mere subjects. Perpetual peace is possible when the state is the product of citizens who, through the exercise of their natural inalienable rights, create a body of laws, a republican constitution, which embodies their collective will and governs their state. In such a Republic, it is citizens, and not rulers, who define the basis on which war would be waged, if war will be waged. Although Kant made a distinction between such Republics and democracies, seeing the latter as one that harbours much basis for revolution, the idea that representative democracies do not go to war against each other has held true for the greater part of the last century. This has indeed come to influence the liberal peacebuilding approach discussed later.

Violent conflict has continued to be a feature of life within states albeit to varying degrees, even in so-called democracies. Galtung's conception of peace is perhaps one of the seminal contributions of the last half-century in advancing understanding of the deep-rooted causes of violent conflict in society. For Galtung, peace is the absence of violence, which is not just physical violence. He distinguishes between *personal* and *direct violence*, and *structural* and *indirect violence*.³ The absence of the first results in *negative peace*, while the absence of the latter produces *positive peace*.⁴ Galtung observes that in the same way that violence is conceived of in this two-sided form, peace can equally be seen as two-sided – the absence of personal/direct violence and the absence of structural/indirect violence – to which he refers as *negative peace* and *positive peace* respectively.⁵ While structural violence does not cause direct physical harm, Galtung argues that it is built into the structure and 'shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances'.⁶

The period after the end of the Cold War saw a rise in incidents of armed conflict, particularly within states, in places like former Yugoslavia and in parts of Africa. The collapse of the Soviet Union saw a reconfiguration of the states of Eastern Europe. The brutal nature and impact of the civil wars in Liberia, former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Sierra-Leone, Burundi and the genocide in Rwanda – all of which broke out between 1989 and 1994, drove home the harsh reality of the post-Cold War World. The pressure to respond to these conflicts was enormous not

least because of the scale of humanitarian tragedies. The recruitment of children as soldiers in Liberia and Sierra Leone (many of who committed vicious atrocities), the amputation of limbs of innocent Sierra Leoneans for no other reason than exercising their right to vote as an alternative to rebellion, and the mass atrocities in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda where almost one million people were massacred in 90 days, shocked the conscience of the global community. In Africa, this class of conflict, intra-state armed conflict became the order of the day as further outbreaks of civil war occurred in Guinea-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire and other places.

Former UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* in 1992,⁷ and its sequel in 1995 were primarily an attempt to find solutions to the situations of armed conflict that increasingly posed a threat to international peace and security. Agenda for peace set the scene for the application of a liberal peacebuilding approach. The plan for returning war-affected societies to peace and stability involved a multi-level restoration of governance from local to international levels through *preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peace enforcement*. The sequential but inter-connected nature of these activities was evident in the initial response to various situations of armed conflict. The effort to get warring parties to agree to end violent confrontation; and the need to keep that agreed peace, typically constituted the first layer of response. It also created space for much needed humanitarian activities. The peacekeeping operations, initially deployed in Liberia and later in Sierra Leone (albeit by a regional grouping – (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group - ECOMOG) and in Somalia (United Nations Operation in Somalia - UNOSOM), Rwanda (United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda - UNAMIR) and Bosnia (The United Nations Protection Force - UNPROFOR) were not intended to do much more than maintain a semblance of order.

Peacebuilding in this regard was essentially conceived as a post-armed conflict activity. Boutros-Ghali defined the notion of post-conflict peacebuilding, as 'actions to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.'⁸ The report of the panel on the review of peace operations in 2000 (commonly known as the *Brahimi Report*), further defined peacebuilding as 'activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to

reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations, something that is more than just the absence of war.⁹ On the face of it, one could reasonably expect that the effort to rebuild institutions and reconcile a war-affected society could only effectively materialise after warring parties agree to a cessation of hostilities and violence has ended. This has since been criticised as a limited approach. Peacebuilding occurs all through the cycle of conflict.¹⁰ And peace operations have since been expanded to include more complex roles as seen in the same places – Liberia and Sierra Leone – both of which virtually collapsed. The evolutions in UN peacekeeping in the last two decades means that a peace operation can be expected to undertake a combination of peacekeeping, robust engagement including through enforcement, and peacebuilding. The last few years have seen increased reference to “integrated missions” and “stabilisation missions,” which are not the immediate focus of this paper.

The assumptions and explanations as to why these states descended into chaos and the character of the intervening actor has tended to influence the path taken toward finding stable peace. By far the most dominant assumption is that states that experience armed conflict are inherently weak, failing, failed or collapsed states.¹¹ As such, stronger and more capable states must be built in order to ensure peace and order in those societies. Contemporary ideas of state-building have no doubt been predominantly founded on European experiences.¹² A state is expected to deliver two sets of core functions in order to be deemed strong or effective. They are derived from Max Weber’s philosophy of coercive and non-coercive functions of the state.¹³ The coercive functions concern a state’s successful claim to the legitimate monopoly of the means of violence. Herein lies the capability to enforce extractive functions such as revenue collection, taxation or exploiting resources, maintain law and order, and provision of security within a given territory.¹⁴ The non-coercive functions typically entail provision of social goods and services, the durability and efficacy of a state’s governance structures and its social and economic redistributive functions.¹⁵ A state that fails to deliver these core functions is said to be weak. Descent of such a state into armed conflict tends to confirm its failure or collapse. It is to these states that international peacebuilding efforts have been directed in the last two decades.

The reality of the international responses to these conflicts in the last two decades is that “state” and “state building” have become intricately connected with “peace” and “peacebuilding.” The idea of interrogating the nature of the state and state building as part of the search for durable peace is eminently sensible. The challenge however is that a particular type of (liberal) state is typically offered as the response. And this is often (not in all cases) so detached from the context in question. It is difficult to challenge the idea that a governance arrangement is required for the maintenance of social order. What is questionable however is that a liberal state provides the basis for that social order in all contexts.

The nature of liberal peacebuilding that is used to reconstitute states after conflict in the post-Cold War world is essentially a one-size-fits-all paradigm that is used to bring “peace” and “democracy” to war-affected societies. On the surface, the idea of supporting societies where conflict has degenerated into violence, to pursue their nation building and state building efforts seems logical. But the assumption that one template will suit all conflict situations is faulty at best. This is compounded by the fact that contemporary approaches in peacebuilding have largely focused on “packaging” efforts meant to transition post-conflict states from war to peace and based on itemised “pillars” and “timelines” to be achieved in a specific timeframe.¹⁶ Ultimately, what is achievable under such circumstances is negative peace and not positive peace. Hence the propensity for these states to relapse into conflict. The relapse into armed conflict is perhaps the biggest dilemma that confronts those seeking to build lasting peace in African (and indeed non-African) conflict situations.¹⁷ Yet this has come to characterise institutional approaches of the United Nations and its partners.

Oliver Richmond, in the *Transformations of Peace*, breaks down the constituent parts of the liberal peace theory into the following – democratisation, human rights, civil society, rule of law and liberalisation most visibly reflected in free market reform and development – what Richmond refers to as the ‘technology of the liberal peacebuilding process’.¹⁸ While it is difficult to dispute a claim for people to have equal rights in a society where the rule of law prevails this has evolved into a template for building particular types of states. The notion of ‘liberal peacebuilding’ has therefore become the framework by which the international community seeks to bring peace to war-affected societies.¹⁹

Roger McGinty and Oliver Richmond ideas of 'evolved thinking' on peace and peacebuilding – victor's peace, institutional peace, constitutional peace and civil peace – which they sum up into the 'conservative' and 'orthodox' models of liberal peace.²⁰ The conservative model consists of 'top down' approaches to peacebuilding and often preferred by international actors, is underlined by practices of coercion, domination and hegemony.²¹ The orthodox model of state building, bottom-up on the other hand is sensitive to 'local ownership' in the building of liberal institutions and more importantly, it includes local actors although still inherently top down.²² The top-down approach projects peace 'as being state led... representing top down and bottom up at the same time... with emphasis on the former.'²³ Indeed as demonstrated elsewhere in this paper, it is not inconsistent with the conservative model as it sees the provision of security as a starting point and proceeds to undertake peacebuilding 'based on international assumption of technical superiority over its subjects via the claim of normative universality of the liberal peace'.²⁴ The bottom up approach, which places emphasis on social justice, is its added value.

In effect, the idea of state-building as peacebuilding and in this regard, the liberal state as the ideal form, has been the dominant narrative of the last two decades. The extent to which this narrative is consistent with the realities of the African environment suited to the realities of African experiences of armed conflict is one of the key issues at the core of this paper.

State-building as Peacebuilding: A critique and examination of its relevance to Africa

Liberal peace building has been subjected to serious criticism in the last decade although a real debate about alternatives is yet to gain ground. A number of gaps are identifiable in the contemporary conceptualisation of peace and state building particularly as it relates to Africa.

Establishing strong and legitimate states is perhaps one of the pre-occupation of contemporary scholars on Africa. This is underpinned by the argument that the main challenges the modern state in Africa confronts with is creation of political order due to lack or weak legitimacy from the population, unpopularity of the state; and inability of the state to consolidate power and

control especially in poor and ethnically heterogeneous populations..²⁵ Therefore, the debates essentially focus on the role of the state in provision of security particularly state security institutions such as the military and police.²⁶ This narrative is not only held in academic discourses, but also reflected amongst policymakers affiliated to international development organisations. Implicit in the debates is the widely held unilinear view that “failed states” are aberrant in managing insecurity, public disorder and lawlessness in their territories, and this is not only a source of instability domestically, but also, internationally.²⁷

The narrative produced in this way has several shortcomings. First, reliance on Weberian or neo-Weberian perspectives in understanding the contemporary state tends to obscure the social and political realities in these countries, thereby failing to capture important conversations taking place between ordinary people and governing elite no matter how unstructured the conversations are.²⁸ Cases in point are classical approaches taken by international donor agencies in countries emerging from conflict. In the 1990’s, for instance, security sector reform (SSR) programmes supported by Bretton Woods institutions, mainly focused attention on modernising dysfunctional security institutions through three, narrow, yet influential approaches guided by an overarching development paradigm that aimed at reducing military expenditures, prevention of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, and enhancing public governance.²⁹ Although the programmes target poor countries, they have been observed to have invariable outcomes on security architecture in these countries largely because, of the failure to recognise that, formal state security systems, in most African countries, are implicitly elite driven and disconnected from protecting the citizens.³⁰ By excluding the non-formal security actors and dynamics, this limitation fails to capture the important conversations taking place between ordinary people and the ruling elite no matter how unstructured and delineated these conversations are.

Second, despite a broad consensual acknowledgment of the importance of state building in the building of peace, particularly in countries affected by intermittent conflict, there are a number of tensions that prevent a systematic linkage between the two. Researchers observe that there are several complex and problematic discords of contemporary state-building approaches, which can be summed into six main thematic areas: (1) Hasty state-building processes; (2)

undermining of the state institutions in peacebuilding processes; (3) meritocracy of Weberian state-building principles; (4) narrow and overemphasised focus on state security actors; (5) Appeasing spoilers in the interest of peace, while neglecting the development of a sustainable state and (6) Preference for short-term transitional mechanisms.³¹

Third, contemporary peacebuilding practices, such as internationally or regionally sanctioned peace operations are highly institutionalised in their approaches.³² These operations tend to focus on post-conflict situations especially towards the tail end of conflict. Thus for instance, UN peace operations have occurred only in a few African countries and, in some cases, they have either been deployed late, have completely ignored festering conflict situations or procrastinated as legal technicalities are being debated.³³ Moreover, institutionalised operations often tend to be inflexible, limited and unable to address several peacebuilding dilemmas like developing adaptable and context specific rapid responses as well as inability to handle possibilities of relapse into conflict. Indeed, the privileging of the technical aspects of peacebuilding, including the building of institutional infrastructure over the politics of relationship building and the facilitation of inter-elite and elite-society conversations is a major flaw of this approach to statebuilding.³⁴

Policy makers in both statebuilding and peacebuilding have previously and consistently been criticised for using a top-down approach that more often ignores local contexts, informal actors and initiatives which if brought on board could lead to longer-term, sustainable, context specific programmes as well as better outcomes.³⁵ One of the criticisms is the view that state-building approaches are imposed by the major international development organisations, emphasising on conventional principles of democratic liberalism, good governance, and economic liberalisation.³⁶ While such principles are fundamental, the manner in which the approaches are sequenced and promoted is seen as an imposed phenomenon from the outside, which tends to inhibit the fundamental rethinking that post-conflict (or indeed pre-armed conflict) states require about the nature and purposes of political authority.

The chequered results of the liberal state-building approach to peacebuilding in Africa and elsewhere compel a closer interrogation of this

approach and a search for alternative strategies for building and sustaining peace. Perhaps one of the most difficult outcomes of peacebuilding efforts, which gives pause to peace and security decision-makers is the issue of conflict relapse. In many conflict situations in Africa, for example, conflict has relapsed into violence within a few years of reaching some form of peace agreement. Some recent examples include Burundi, Central African Republic, Mali, South Sudan and Guinea-Bissau, which experiences recurring instability or collapse of central government. Whether or not violent relapse is a result of a particular approach to peacebuilding in the first instance – liberal or otherwise – is an unsettled issue. But what is apparent is that liberal peacebuilding has tended to leave behind liberal-like institutions that are at best caricatures of the liberal democracies that they were intended to mirror. The challenge of embedding institutions created by liberal peacebuilding in the target society is difficult to overcome without a deep-rooted conversation about the terms on which people in that society will live together. Invariably, internationally supported processes end up placing statehood and sovereignty over qualitative peace. As Oliver Richmond and others have observed in places like Cambodia, the end result of liberal peacebuilding is little more than virtual peace leaving the potential for a recurrence of the same form of violence that it sought to prevent in the first instance. Herein lies the classical peacebuilding dilemma – in which there is a chance that in about 50 per cent of cases, violent conflicts will resurface.³⁷

The historical trajectory of African states and societies and the conversations that shaped that path are a missing part of the application of *state-building as peacebuilding* in that continent. African states in their present form were not in existence at the time that Europe's philosophers through generations of conversations and debate in the public sphere, the issue of where sovereign power rested and how that power would be exercised. Indeed, African societies were under the dominions of various European states for the better part of the last century and a half. Under tightly maintained colonial orders, they were owned, swapped or inherited by Europe's sovereign states following the World Wars (e.g. Tanzania, Togo and Rwanda). Their participation in debates about sovereignty, war and peace only began when they became independent dominions and legitimate sovereign states and members of the community of states at the United

Nations. However, the question of how those African states emerged, the basis of their sovereignty and how the sovereignty is exercised is a subject that is rarely at the core of statebuilding and peacebuilding discourse. When many of them have fallen into situations of armed conflict in the last decades, a different kind of explanation was offered for their calamity.

The structural roots of the absence of stable peace in Africa run deep. The challenge of building peace in African conflicts must be seen within the continent and countries' historical trajectories. The states that were created at the end of colonial rule were not the products of conversations in those societies about the kind of collective future they would pursue and the terms on which they would live together. Instead, they inherited states and systems that were in large part removed from the realities of those societies. Security institutions, for example, were a wholesale transfer from the colonial order. The transfer of power from colonial rule was in essence a change over of one elite grouping for another and less about institutional transformation in ways that reflected the collectively imagined future of those societies. The intentions underlying the creation of key institutions such as the security establishment did not change fundamentally.³⁸ It was to this superficial change, for example, that Peter Ekeh alluded when he wrote 'colonialism and the two publics: a theoretical statement', in 1975. He contrasted the 'civic public' with the 'primordial public'. The former, he argued, was amoral and disconnected from the private realm; while the latter, was moral and connected to the private realm. In essence, the civic institutions created under the colonial order, were not embedded in the socio-cultural life of the societies over which they presided. Four decades later, much of this remains true in many parts of Africa.

The emergence of African states right at the heart Cold War arguably influence the paths of their development. The coercive power acquired by the many authoritarian regimes, which invariably retained power could not be challenged in the face of a Cold War system that supported those rulers on the basis of their ideological leanings. With the restraining danger of superpower confrontation keeping a lid on the escalation of conflict, structural violence festered. And conversations of silence with non-prominent conversable spaces were the order of the day. It took the end of the Cold War for a transformation to

occur in those spaces. The end of superpower rivalry meant that great power support for African leaders no longer occurred on the basis of East-West rivalry. New conditionality such as democracy and good governance became the basis for support to African states. This meant that the spaces for conversations between people and their leaders broadened. Inevitably, violence became a key part of those conversations in many places. The brutal armed conflict that accompanied some of those violent conversations could not be contained in places like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Somalia without external intervention aimed at achieving stable peace in these countries. Ironically, some of those internal interventions would seek to return those countries to the models of statehood that characterised colonial transfer of power, without facilitating a deeper conversation about the collective future imagined by the target societies.

This liberal peacebuilding approach is what has been much critiqued by prominent studies (**). The most far reaching and introspective of this peacebuilding agenda has examined the dynamics of democratization and marketization and in the end proposed institutionalization before democratization.³⁹ To be certain, this argument is not faulty nor is it illogical. But it fails to take into account that for this institutionalisation to take hold and become embedded in the target societies, a non-violent inter-elite and elite society conversation must of necessity be charted.⁴⁰

There has been inter-elite and elite-society and elite-outsiders conversation and this is segmented and fragmented, reinforcing and contradicting institutions with all their complexity. The way situations unfold in practice, thus, reveals these complex and context specific paths that cannot be viewed because of the dominance of the 'liberal way of seeing' that assesses state and peacebuilding experience in terms of becoming more or less of the liberal variant. Yet they are not qualitatively different whatsoever. However, shifting the analytical lens may increase the visibility of alternative ways of looking at actual state and peacebuilding practices that would potentially give rise to a different approach to peace and state building by local and international actors and hence the need to approach the subject from a different perspective.

Accordingly, we argue for a reframing of the state-building–peacebuilding problematique by re-centring the notion of *conversation* in the processes of

building peace and viable states.** As such, peacebuilding conversations are not only about building peace but also are essentially about the normative and institutional underpinning of the peace (whatever its type). We argue that state institutions, whatever their form, would be embedded in society if and only if they are a product of prior conversation about peace and social order among elites and between elites and society; and that non-violent conversation tends to usher durable peace and patterns of governance. This, we believe, would serve as an alternative way of approaching the state building-peacebuilding problematique, of course, with a caution or two. First, there had been violent conversations that ended up in consolidating state institutions though this is not likely in the contemporary period. Second, once emerged out of violent or non-violent conversations institutions in turn shape the kind of conversation a society is to have, and the kind of peace or war that follows from it (hence the process is essentially path dependent limiting the relevance of one-size-fits-all, template-based approach to peace and state building). This reframing of orientation brings the notion of political settlement to the centre of the debate in the state building and peacebuilding endeavour.

STATEBUILDING CONVERSATIONS AT THE ROOT OF ARMED CONFLICT – IDENTIFYING COMMON TRENDS

Society's *conversations* about an imagined collective future based on shared history and the adherence to common values around which individuals can cumulate their aspirations – to live well and to live long – invariably produce a people's vision of the "common good". What is difficult to generalise at any point in time is the path that a people or society takes toward the collective attainment of this vision. Herein lies the most difficult challenge confronting the dominant approaches to the pursuit of stable peace. Crafting the ideal path to peace on the basis of another society's path, shaped by their own struggles, contestations and unique lessons is invariably a recipe for failure. This is what the attempt to build peace by building a particular model of state in Africa in the last two and a half decades reveals.

It then becomes possible to conceive of Africa's post-independence and post-Cold War conflicts as in part "conversations" about nation and state-building taking place in specific national contexts. The notion of conversation advanced here is not restricted to structured, overt and delineated dialogues, discussions or exchanges that occur between a variety of actors within society. Rather we are particularly interested in the wide-ranging interactions among groups in society – however unstructured, unseen and inexplicit – and their resulting signifiers. The logic of peacebuilding must therefore derive from the conversations being had by the people of that state and their rulers about the terms on which they will live together. These conversations and the manner in which they are being had are at the root of much of conflict witnessed in Africa in the five decades since many of the states in the region became independent dominions.

In this paper, we take the position that many of Africa's post-independence and post-cold war conflicts are in part "conversations" about nation and statebuilding taking place in the specific national contexts. The notion of *conversation* advanced here is not restricted to structured, overt and delineated dialogues, discussions or exchanges that occur among a variety of actors within society. Rather, we are particularly interested in the wide-ranging interactions among groups in society – however unstructured, unseen and inexplicit – and their resulting signifiers. We see these as particular forms of conversations, which occur especially in situations where power asymmetry is rife not least between populations and those in positions of authority, who preside over them.

These conversations can be said to be about statebuilding when certain types of issues are at the heart of those conversations and when there is an indication that they are occurring between particular segments of society. For example, existential issues, where the physical or material survival of a group might be at stake; the functioning of state institutions and the degree to which they are responsive to the needs of the larger population; access to channels of power and resources, among many other things. As such, when citizens create alternative systems of response to needs deemed to have been neglected by their governments or those in authority there is an important conversation to be found therein. This is notwithstanding that the absence of a satisfactory response system has not been explicitly stated or requested. These conversations might be

occurring between particular groups and their government; between groups with competing demands in terms of access to state resources; and typically, elite groupings struggling for the control of machinery of government, among various other things.

By their very trajectory, the vast majority of African states are the product of many difficult conversations first between colonial elites and African peoples and societies; and in the post-independence period, between Africa's *inheritance* elite and their people. Some of the earlier conversations, which led to political independence for the societies concerned, were necessarily violent. And not surprisingly, in the absence of deliberate, structured dialogue about the terms on which groups in the newly independent societies would live together, some of the conversations between the post-colonial rulers and their people are not dissimilar. The conversations have been concerned with among other things, issues of (in)security, (in)justice and their enablers, which reflect the diversity of interests in society and as such are invariably gendered, creed or belief-driven, age-based or fraught with other identity patterns not least ethnicity and class. These conversations occur violently or not, at various levels in these societies between elite groupings and/or between ruling elites and segments of society sometimes struggling for control of the machinery of state.

We suggest that by their very nature, these conversations are part and parcel of the processes of state and/or nation building in the post-independence period. If formal conversations or dialogues between inheritance elite and their people did not precede the creation of those states, the very fact of their co-existence within a set boundary was bound to produce forms of interaction in their new situation. There are invariably, competing interests and demands, which require mediation while people also demand to have a say in the systems that govern their daily lives.

The place of power and power holders in the mediation of the competing demands in these spaces cannot be overstated. Perceived or actual exclusion from sources of power and, alongside this, a perception that the demands of certain groups are given more priority can lead to open conflict. Failure to achieve meaningful participation in the creation of systems that can effectively address these differences has produced various forms of responses within society.

Typically, those with access to power and channels of redress or expression, openly contest for control of the spaces. Others retreat from formal mainstream systems to pursue alternative channels of responding to their needs. For example, the manifestations of this on issues of security are visible in several areas. One is that ordinary people, far removed from access to the protection offered by state security establishments then retreat to seek protection from non-state systems, which obtain their loyalty. Another is that those who feel excluded and are willing to pay for the services of security providers outside of state arrangements. Yet another manifestation, and perhaps a more significant one for our purposes, is where those who as a result of such perceived exclusion seek to wrest away the machinery of the control of the state from current occupiers of the space. These are the examples of statebuilding conversations that have escalated into violence. Invariably, these conversations remain confined to this elite class/interest group such that the rest of society becomes disconnected from the larger conversations. Yet they are affected by the impact of those violent conflicts, which typically render them displaced, injured or migrating. Trends across Africa reflect the dominance of this last scenario. We have thus seen many instances in the post-independence and post-Cold War period, where these struggles between segments of power holders or elite have battled it out openly. Examples include civil wars in Nigerian, Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau and most recently Mali and South Sudan.

It is therefore expected that peacebuilding interventions in such settings might seek to transform the dynamics between ruling elite and local populations, thus setting them on a common course of nation building. Of the identity patterns mentioned above, that of gender is rarely elevated to the top of mainstream conflict resolution strategies, while issues such as ethnicity and religion often receive considerable attention even if in ways which lack authenticity. Overall, however, much of the effort in peacebuilding has been focused on bargaining between elite groupings without a fundamental re-ordering of elite mind set and approaches in favour of a collective, citizen-centred national agenda. Peacemakers have tended to focus an inordinate amount of attention on the need to bring the attendant violence to an immediate end. In so doing, they may have inadvertently ensured a relapse of violence at a future date.

Post-conflict peace and statebuilding efforts in Africa have emerged largely from several scenarios: one in which the violence ended through a military solution on the battlefield. This does not preclude various shades of external support for one side or the other; another in which external intervention helps achieve a peace settlement; and yet another in which the arranged peace was the product of externally facilitated negotiations between the parties to the violent conflict. Whether or not these scenarios offer a chance to bring about a transformation in the internal dynamics of the society and thus achieve stable peace by returning those affected to a collective conversation about the terms on which they can live together peacefully within a viable state is yet to be adequately understood. This is perhaps reflected in the classical peacebuilding dilemma – i.e. the likelihood that a violent conflict will recur in affected societies within ten years of the end of armed conflict – has spurred continued interest in this subject globally.⁴¹

Equally, while we have seen a sharp variation in approach between contexts that did not witness a heavy external injection of a liberal peace agenda and those where peace processes have been shaped or led largely from within, the outcomes thus far, have not produced compelling evidence of lasting peace. Although there are visible differences in the strengths and viability of the states. A closer examination of some of these cases points to different trends. In this regard the subject of political or peace settlement becomes an important factor in the analysis of these experiences. The question arises as to whether and how the nature of the settlement reached to end armed conflict allows for a return to the conversations that predated the war.

Connecting political/peace settlement to the notion conversation

Before examining the connection between political or peace settlement and conversation, it is important to clarify this paper's understanding of, and use of political and peace settlement. As employed in much of contemporary scholarly and international development literature, political settlement has its origin in political economy discourses.⁴² The majority of perspectives on political settlements especially in peace studies are non-static events or processes of negotiation(s), after war, mainly between elites of rules governing the distribution

of rights and privileges.⁴³ More prominent, is the literature on settlements after termination of war. Although these studies vary widely, they can be summed under three major themes. First is the way in which war terminates; second concerns the effects of the types of war termination strategy on the nature of post-war peace and state building; and third is the durability of peace after war.⁴⁴ Studies focusing on the type of peace settlement tend to argue that military victories are less exposed to war recurrence as compared with negotiated settlements. However, the relationship between types of settlement and the durability of peace is not yet a settled issue. This is what the notion of conversation further interrogates in this paper.

The political settlement discourse distinguishes the concept as structurally different between developed and developing countries, where it has been argued that political settlement in 'all developing countries' is 'rent-seeking' and 'client' based and, power is exercised through informal patron-client organisations.⁴⁵ However, such neo-patrimonialistic discourses according to Adebayo Olukoshi analyse African politics, economy and society on the basis of *inta alia* distinct binominal oppositions like, the formal and the informal, hardly give 'useful for understanding the logic of politics'.⁴⁶ Furthermore, they fail to acknowledge the 'existence of a political community in Africa that is characterised by diversity, contestation, sacrifice and visions of a better society', and such a discourse, he notes, 'limits the capacity of students to pay serious attention to the struggles that give meaning to politics in contemporary Africa and which propel the process of change.'⁴⁷ Therefore, with the above in mind, it is crucial to formulate an appropriate understanding relevant to the African context.

Here, we use political and peace settlements interchangeably but privilege the use of peace settlement given the significant attention placed on the trajectory of conversations that lead to stable peace. We understand peace settlement as an activity or decisive action that marks the end of armed conflict or a transition from violent conflict to the pursuit of conflict by non-violent means. This decisive moment embodies, implicitly or explicitly, the terms under which conflicting parties would live together regardless of the extent to which these terms are consensual or imposed. Every political order, however dictatorial, depends on some sort of acceptance, as there is the possibility to subvert imposition from

above no matter how grave the consequences might be. Thus, this helps us to discern not only the processes through which terms of shared lives or/and agreement come about but also the substantive content of the arrangement by which contending groups live together. We do not presume, at the outset, that such an arrangement would be procedurally and substantively better in negotiated settlement than victory based ones. The only point we wish to emphasise is that such an arrangement, drawing from Khan is supported by the power balance among contending actors taking external influence into account.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, understood as the decisive event marking the end of armed conflict and the introduction of a new political order, political settlements does not simply refer to the way war terminates but also the changes in the warring actors and their relationship during the course of the termination.⁴⁹ This refers to changes in the organizational, ideological and mobilization capacity and will of warring actors, the inclusiveness of the actors and/processes ushering in the termination, and the level of consensus in the arrangement by means of which a transitioning society is going to live together.⁵⁰ This understanding is informed by the assumption that the end of civil war is not only about the end of armed activity but also is about change in a range of organizational and political dynamics. Understood this way, our definition combines elements that simultaneously exclude and include, compare and contrast the two types of settlements.⁵¹ By this, we mean, first, settlements based on victory are presented to be qualitatively different from settlement based on negotiation and in this sense we can compare processes giving rise to that decisive moment marking a transition to another form of order and the extent this shapes consequent processes of conversations, violent or otherwise, about peace and state building.

The normative, institutional, organizational as well as relational forms these conversations are manifested in and are materialized through is an essential aspect of the process that set countries on different trajectories to peace and state building. At one level, they are the manifestation of these conversations and at another level they are the medium through which these conversations are materialized. In other words, once in existence they shape the kind of conversation to be had and they manifest the kind of conversation that had been going on. Arrangements that institutionalized a particular form of governance (ethnic

federalism in Ethiopia, devolution in Kenya, justice management in Rwanda, resource governance in Sierra Leone), for instance, indicate the kind of conversation that was central before and during the peace settlement and at the same time shapes the subsequent conversations to be had. By examining the extent to which particular peace settlements took into account the deep seated conversations that preceded and led to armed conflict and the degree to which these were addressed in the post-settlement periods, we might better understand the basis for stable peace and viable states in these societies.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM RESPONSES TO AFRICAN CONFLICTS?

We have argued that the narratives behind the trajectory of nation or state-building in African states vis-à-vis normative peace and state building intervention strategies particularly in countries affected by armed conflict are disconnected. The (un) intended assumption in externally driven post-conflict interventions is that the pathway to peace is ending or controlling of violence and building institutions that enforce it. A critical analysis of this logic in armed conflict environments however reveals a number challenges not least that of conflict relapse. By offering here several snapshots of situations of armed conflict where peacebuilding interventions had various other perspectives, we seek to address some lingering questions. Central to this is the extent to which particular forms of peace settlement are able to return to the nation and state building conversations that lie at the root of conflict and thus whether they offer a path to stable peace.

The following key questions are considered in discussing some illustrative examples of peace settlements in Africa:

- What state building issues and conversations led to armed conflict/ war?
- What is the nature of the peace or political settlement that emerged to bring the war/ armed conflict to an end?
- To what extent did the peace settlement address the state building conversations that led to war?

- Did the post- (armed) conflict agenda or approach sustain the dominant narratives and approaches to peace and state-building or did they emphasise an alternative narrative and approach?
- What indications are there that the peace achieved is stable/ sustainable?

Somalia/Somaliland

Somalia perhaps provides a unique case where two regions of the same republic—Southern region (Trust Territory of Somalia) and Somaliland, the Northern region, (British Somaliland)—exemplify the paradoxes of externally-led versus internally-driven peacebuilding processes. Since the fall of General Siyad Barre authoritarian rule in 1991, Somalia, particularly the Southern region has continued to face periodic violent conflict.⁵² The intermittent conflict have occurred despite numerous externally-driven military and non-military interventions. In contrast, following the Somalia National Movement's (SNM) led armed struggle against Barre's brutal rule in Somaliland, the region has had relatively stable, largely internally-driven and indigenous processes of building peace. The contradictions mirror varied state-building trajectories between the two regions that emerged from the colonial period and continued through the post-colonial period. The state governance system established by the British Colonial authorities in the North was characterised by transparent institutions but more reliant on indirect rule through clans while in the Southern region, the Italians preferred on dominant rule over clans.⁵³

One of the major outcomes of this rule was the destruction of traditional social and political institutions governance and in its place was establishment of a centralised system of administration. Furthermore, the varied post-colonial politics of distributing influential government positions to elites based on clan identity which also implicitly meant access to resources such as land, sore discord and conflict between dominant clans as well as further alienating Somaliland from Mogadishu in the South.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, since the collapse, Somalia has been deeply divided along clan-based movements and various armed groups who jostle to exert control. Responses to the conflicts in Southern region collapse of the state have mainly been *bottom up* and *top down* interventions to the peace process with elites and external actors both at international and regional level preferring the latter

with an aim at re-establishing a strong centralist national state in Somalia.⁵⁵ The top down approaches have seen numerous military and non-military intervention including the US-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF) 1992-93 and United Nation Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) I and II in 1992 and 1995, as well as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).⁵⁶ Non-military interventions have seen a plethora of mediation conference that have produced and reproduced accords, the majority held in and facilitated by neighbouring countries – Djibouti, Addis Ababa and Kenya.⁵⁷

However, while these interventions made short-term gains for instance, delivering humanitarian assistance at the height of the war, they encountered major setbacks especially inability of to understand the complexities and political dynamics of the conflict.⁵⁸ In addition, some of the initial peace agreements focused on establishing UN's blueprints of rebuilding a central democratic government. In spite of the interventions, they have failed in preventing persistence of violent conflicts especially in South-Central Somalia.⁵⁹ This has resulted to several dilemmas. First is the need to focus more on political and socio economic issues rather than military approaches;⁶⁰ Second is the lack of representation in the largely elite driven peace settlement processes which have led to challenges in implementation of peace agreements. Third is reliance on external fund to support peace processes especially in the South Central region. This contrasts with indigenously driven peace process in Somaliland and to a significant extent in Puntland. The processes are largely community-led, organised and funded by Somali's.⁶¹ The main pitfall of externally-funded support is that peace actors have little investment and ownership of the process and implementation of outcomes. The inability of externally-driven interventions, to end violent conflict have not only increased insecurity due to inability of security forces to enforce the law, but have in the past influenced re-emergence of *informal* governance systems (local *Shari'a* Courts) in South Central Somalia and locally-led intervention or *bottom up* or "building block" approaches to peace in Somaliland.⁶² The latter process has been implemented in Somaliland peacebuilding process as well as in building blocks for political and administrative structures in Northern region such as Puntland, and Somaliland. In contrast this system was not viable in South Central Somalia.⁶³

Unlike in Southern Somalia where a US and UN backed peacekeeping mission intervened to restore peace and order, in Somaliland, the main insurgent group, Somali National Movement (SNM), entrusted the process of post-conflict reconstruction and nation-building to the *Guurti* — council of elders.⁶⁴ This process led to establishment of a community based system of government that integrated both Western and traditional forms of governance institutions.⁶⁵ Furthermore, although the reconciliation process was not without challenges, whereby areas such as Burao and Berbera threatened to protract back to conflict, the *Guurti*, using informal but holistic reconciliatory initiatives, played an important role in restoring stability between inter-clan rivalries.⁶⁶

This approach is unique in several ways not widely discussed. For instance, the initial process of crucial clan reconciliation conferences was locally financed through community self-help systems with limited external financial assistance.⁶⁷ Conversely, the first one-year UN Mission in Somalia deployed in central and southern regions had a net expenditure of 42.9 million dollars.⁶⁸ Additionally, another area often alluded to, but inadequately scrutinized in State building narratives, is the role of women in political and economic development in Somaliland. Some initial studies for example suggest after the war, the position, expectations and agency of women agency has been significantly altered and there are trends of women increasingly playing active rather than passive roles in socio-economic spheres.⁶⁹ This must be critically challenged however since socio-economic roles rarely translates to holistic emancipation for women in patriarchal societies. To be certain, Somaliland's endogenous nation-building processes are not without faults. Doubts have been cast on the extent to which Somaliland's hybrid system especially the traditional and clan-based system can produce a legitimate, inclusive and democratic political order.⁷⁰ While there is truism in these criticisms, it is evidently clear that minimal external intervention allows for self-organisation necessary, which is a crucial pillar for attaining mutual consensus and building legitimacy in governance.⁷¹

Rwanda

In Rwanda a decade after the tumultuous and brutal armed conflicts in the mid-1990s and the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, the state has remained relatively

stable. The stability has allowed Rwanda to implement wide-ranging reforms particularly in improving and strengthening peace and security of the country and in certain cases the region as well as bridging social inequalities, especially gender disparities of its citizens. The state has, for example, been implementing progressive socioeconomic policies anchored on the externally influenced approaches such as millennium development goal.⁷² Emphasis has been on *formalising the informal*, that is, integrating local solutions, citizen participation and governance which is channelled through initiatives such as Gacaca Courts; *Umuganda* or community service monthly day; *Itorero ry' Igihugu*, an Institute for civic education; and Ubudehe, a 'system of intra-community co-operation based on collective and individual actions'.⁷³

There are varied attributions to this trend. First is that as research has shown since the pre-colonial times and until the genocide in 1994, identities and reconstruction of "ideas of identity" have been at the core of Rwanda's nation- and state-building conversation.⁷⁴ These conversations have over the time evolved from pre-colonial conversations of the constantly shifting identities of who is a Hutu, Tutsi or Twa,⁷⁵ to the assigning of identities by the colonial authorities, which resulted in inequalities due to preferential treatment accorded mainly to Tutsi.⁷⁶ Although the post-colonial period presented an opportunity for Rwanda to reverse the changes on identity structures during the colonial period, the now Hutu-led First and Second Republics used the state institutions to reproduce the same ethnic identities, structures and institutions to systematically repress the Tutsi. The marginalization of the Tutsi not only led to resentment and reaction that led to the brutal civil war and genocide, but also laid ground for post-genocide conversation on state and building.

These conversations have centred on various state-building efforts aimed towards restoration of peace and security after the genocide.⁷⁷ Furthermore while on one hand a perspective fronted is that considerable elements of the 'successes' in Rwanda's statebuilding agenda can be attributed to for instance on foreign aid and this may be detrimental to peacebuilding both nationally and regionally.⁷⁸ On the other hand, the nature of the political settlement — victory and assent to power of the RPF—has allowed an *uninterrupted* space of the state to implement these reforms.⁷⁹ However, while the RPF has allowed these conversations the elite

bureau had been adamant in managing these conversible spaces and has consistently forbidden certain controversial issues including on political prisoners, the question on identities especially of Hutu's or other Rwandan's killed outside the genocide, freedom of the media, the murder of former RPF ruling elites among others.⁸⁰ Furthermore, as seen in Rwanda's peace negotiations processes leading to the Arusha accords, the processes emphasised on state-centric frameworks and therefore that told us little about societal narratives of state building; and secondly their interpretation of the state is limited by reliance on neoliberal and Westphalian ideas of state functions.

A different view of the country suggests that not only does the state building process face an array of challenges but has also ingeniously developed unique ways of confronting these challenges. Considering for instance the country is densely populated and has limited land available to sustain the bulging population settlement of returning refugees has been a thorny and complex issue. The need to carefully manage on the one hand donor reservations on land resettlement policies and on the other the varied and complex identities of returning refugees saw the government develop an emergency *imidugudu* (a villagisation programme). Although the programme was far from perfect not only did contribute towards solving the housing problem but also provide critical lessons on settlement policies need to be flexible and respond to local diversities.⁸¹ Nevertheless, while the country has made some progress in targets like eradication of poverty and improving access to healthcare for rural populations, issues such as addressing youth unemployment remain a challenge.⁸² Estimates suggest that 42 per cent of young people who constitute around 40% of the population are unemployed.⁸³ While the government has initiated aggressive land tenure and agricultural reforms crucial to Rwanda's post-war development, research suggests that it may inadvertently undermine the livelihood stability of rural subsistence farmers.⁸⁴

South Sudan

Since separating from Sudan and establishing the state of South Sudan (SS),⁸⁵ doubts have been rife on whether the two will fully realise recommendations of the peace settlement—Comprehensive Peace agreement (CPA) signed by the

Sudan government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army SPLM/A in 2005 after decades of civil war.⁸⁶ Above all there are uncertainties on ability and viability of SS to function as a state. The colonial administration's disengagement with South Sudan, left institutional and instrumental constraints for successive regimes in Khartoum to unify disparate ethnic nationalities in the territory into a 'modern' nation-state.⁸⁷ Attempts to consolidate the state ended up in centralising power, resources and governance in the capital, while politically and economically excluding other regions, including South Sudan. Consequentially, this bred discontent and agitation for separation mainly from the South.⁸⁸

However for a long time the separatist movements lacked homogeneity due to ethnic, religious and linguistic cleavages in the movement. This led to number of intellectuals and elites were able to mobilize political groups, formed rebel militants and organised revolt against the Northern based government, which culminated to two major civil wars.⁸⁹ The initial civil war which began in 1952 - 1976, led by South Sudan liberation insurgent movement - *Anya Nya*, gave South Sudan regional autonomy after the vicious war ended with signing the Addis Ababa Accord. However despite Southern Sudan being granted regional autonomy, power was still excessively concentrated within the autocratic Khartoum government and political exclusion of the South still continued. Consequently, the grievances which had built up from flouting of the peace accord, were sparked by the Northern government move to introduce Sharia Law among the predominant Christian Southerners. This led to the second resistance and longest civil war against the Sudan government, which began in 1983, and was led by SPLM/A leader, the late John Garang.

The war ended in 2005 after the two parties signed formally the CPA agreement. The agreement among other resolutions not only laid transition foundations for a secession, but more importantly, was for the two government to oversee proper demarcation of the North-South border, particularly the contested, volatile and yet resource rich areas of Abyei in Bahr el Ghazal region; resolution of the conflict in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States; and modalities of sharing the revenue from the oil in Abyei and Kordofan. Nonetheless, now that Southern Sudan has formally gained independence, the two remaining challenges mentioned

still lay ahead, and appear as a the greatest threat to sustainability of the peace. Therefore will post-conflict South Sudan be able to function alone as a State, govern itself and sustain the peace in the long term?

Despite gaining independence from Sudan, conflict in South Sudan has intensified and significantly transformed, by acquiring new agendas and attracted varied actors. Conflicts have recurred not only with Sudan in volatile and disputed area of Abyei but since 2013 the SS government is facing a major rebellion in key areas such as the capital Juba, and oil rich towns including Bor, Malakal and Bentiu. The conflicts have tragically led to enormous loss of life, violation of fundamental human rights, displacements and high social-economic costs to both South Sudan and bordering countries. The conflict can no longer be viewed solely as an insurgency war, or largely as fuelled by racial, ethnic and religious feuds, but has also, intensified due to proliferation of small arms and light weapons; acquired political and economic agendas due to oil and other resources; as well as regionalized due to instability in neighbouring countries. Therefore, the critical question is how will South Sudan rebuild itself from decades of conflict?

Sierra Leone

Today Sierra Leone is at a critical stage in its post-war transition. Although it is regarded as a model of post-conflict reconstruction, challenges of building state institutions ravaged by endemic elitism, greed, corruption and nepotism still remain patent.⁹⁰ Furthermore, while the relative stability following the end of the protracted civil war, in 2002, has allowed achieving of some socio-economic milestones; the recovery pace appears suffers from major challenges especially in consolidating peace and the march towards security and development.⁹¹ At the core of Sierra Leone conversations on state-building has been first, identity conversation in the quest for nationhood that emerged from ethno-regional divisions created during British colonial rule and later instrumentalised by elites' competitive and self-seeking politics during the post-colonial period.⁹² The concomitant post-independence state was organised along ethnic identities and dominated by divisive political culture that fragmented the society into ethnic and regional alliances rather than establish a collective national identity.⁹³ Coupled with the reliance on state resources, corruption, exclusionary and repressive rule

to consolidate power, post-independence regimes put the country on a violent precipice that eventually culminated into civil war. In addition, management of the country's natural resources was permeated by culture of corruption and elite greed. In addition to lack credible democracy, marginalisation of rural and regional conflicts, studies note that conversations over contestations of how to manage of one of the contributing cause of the conflict.⁹⁴

However, proper governance in the country is still an imperative and unfulfilled objective. The wider view today is that the issues that predated the conflict that is patrimonialism, lack of the rule of law and lack of transparency, corruption in the mining sector among others are still present in the post conflict state and state-building conversations.⁹⁵ Moreover, key sectors of central government such as health sector as observed in the country's management of the Ebola outbreak still remains largely dysfunctional,⁹⁶ and corruption, intolerance as well as political exclusion remain rampant.⁹⁷ Furthermore, although the country has experienced substantial economic growth in recent years, poverty and underdevelopment remain major challenges. More importantly despite the exclusion of the youth into the political and socio-economic development having been previously identified as one of the major contributing factors into the war,⁹⁸ the pace of rebuilding institutions that facilitated youth participation is incredibly slow and is often playing catch-up in constantly changing youth dynamics..⁹⁹ Among the issues includes the alarmingly high level of poverty, unemployment and especially among the youth, high inequalities levels particularly among women and other vulnerable groups.¹⁰⁰ These challenges threaten the already fragile peace.

Perhaps one major challenge worth interrogation is the peace process that culminated with the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement in 7 July 1999. The agreement, which was cast as a solution to the conflict with two components: military resolution, through the disarmament of combatants; and political settlement, by implementing a power-sharing arrangement ended up as a failure with neither of the parties honouring the provisions.¹⁰¹ Although there have been previous attempts to explain the why the accord failed;¹⁰²and thereby attributing the end of the civil war to the belated UK's military intervention, one question that remains unanswered is the how long the 'stability dividend' will last. Despite the huge external donor support and internal societal confidence that was accorded in

setting up of various institutions as well as passing of legislation to promote equality including that of gender, is the ability of these institutions to run effectively and independently of political interferences remains a huge concern.¹⁰³, Additionally, as pointed out elsewhere, in the event of such conundrums--failed political agreements and delayed international intervention, what is the fate of citizens and future peace under elite driven political settlements?¹⁰⁴

CONCLUSION

The logic of statebuilding is to be found in the conversations occurring within the target state; it cannot be built on a generic model/ template or the result will be a "hit and miss" Peacemaking and peacebuilding in this regard are inherently about the commitments of people and their leaders to a particular kind of future. In the absence of such commitments, any intervention aiming to build particular kinds of institutions of state, with the aim of mitigating violent conflict, is invariably built on weak foundations and has a greater likelihood of failure. The key question therefore is whether or not the kind of peace that is designed reflects the commitment of a cross section of the population to work toward a viable and peaceful state. In this paper, we have shown that peacebuilding is not an end itself nor is it simply about ending violence. It should ideally be about mediating the conversations (violent or otherwise) between people and their rulers in their bid to evolve workable systems and viable states that meet the needs of the whole of society rather than a few.

Initial observations suggest that conflicts that were the result of negotiations with heavy external facilitation such as in Sierra Leone and South Sudan, tend to project the dominant narrative; while conflicts that were the product of internal negotiations and processes as well as those that ended in victory on the battlefield tend to support the alternative narrative at the core of this paper. The degree to which all of these generate sustainable peace is another matter altogether. Indeed, these settlements and in fact the violent conflict that they were designed to address are a part of the state building conversations occurring in the target African contexts. In this regard, the peace settlement then becomes a unique set of conversations that is presumed to have lasting effect on subsequent conversations in that context.

Notes

- ¹ See Report of the UN Advisory Group of Experts (UN AGE) on the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, June 2015. See also UN Security Council, *Meetings Records*, 2015, at: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/meetings/records/2015.shtml> and UN Security Council, *Meetings Records*, 2016 [as at 7 April 2016] at: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/meetings/records/2016.shtml>
- ² UN Security Council, *Meetings Records*, 2015 at: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/meetings/records/2015.shtml>
- ³ Galtung, Johan. "Violence, peace, and peace research." *Journal of peace research* 6.3 (1969): 183. Print.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 171
- ⁷ Boutros-Ghali, Boutros. *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping*. Paris: United Nations, 1992. Print
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.
- ⁹ Brahimi, Lakhdar. *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*. New York: United Nations, 2000. Print.
- ¹⁰ Cousins, Elizabeth M, Chetan Kumar, and Karin Wermester. *Peacebuilding As Politics: Cultivating Peace in Fragile Societies*. Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001. Print.; UN AGE 2015
- ¹¹ The terms "collapsed state" were earlier introduced by Zartman, William I. "Posing the Problem of State Collapse". Introduction. *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*. Ed. Zartman. Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1995. 1-15. Print. and, Mazrui, Ali Al'amin. "The Blood of Experience: the Failed State and Political Collapse in Africa." *World Policy Journal*. 12.1 (1995): 28-34. Print. On "failed" and "weak" states, see, Gros, Jean-Germain. "Towards a Taxonomy of Failed States in the New World Order: Decaying Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and Haiti." *Third World Quarterly*. 17.3 (1996): 455-471. Print. Also see, Rotberg, Robert I. *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2004. Print. For a critique of these aphorisms see, for example, Wai, Zubairu. "Neo-patrimonialism and the Discourse of State Failure in Africa." *Review of African Political Economy*. 39.131 (2012): 27-43. Print. ; and also, Call, Charles T. "The Fallacy of the 'failed State'." *Third World Quarterly*. 29.8 (2008): 1491-1507. Print.
- ¹² Tilly, Charles. "Western State-making and Theories of Political Transformation." *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. Ed. Charles Tilly. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975. 601-639. Print.
- ¹³ Weber, Max, H. Heinrich Gerth, and C Wright Mills, eds, and trans. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946. 77-128. Print.
- ¹⁴ See, for example, Tilly, *Western State-making and Theories of Political Transformation*, 601-639 (note 12); Tilly, Charles. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." Eds. Evans, Peter B, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. *Bringing the State Back in*, New York, Ny: Cambridge University Press, 1985. 169-191. Print.
- ¹⁵ For a general discussion on characteristics of modern states see, Pierson, Christopher. *The Modern State*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.; Brautigam, Deborah, Odd-Helge Fjeldstad, and Mick Moore. *Taxation and State-Building in Developing Countries: Capacity and Consent*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Print. Wai, *Neo-patrimonialism and the Discourse of State Failure in Africa*, 27-43 (note 11), elaborates these characteristics with specific reference to African states.
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- ⁶⁷ The initial Boorame peace and reconciliation conference that ended the fighting and oversaw transfer of power from SNM military wing to civilian administration, was largely financed by loans from the business community—estimated at three million dollars and limited external finance external sources such as the Life and Peace Institute, the Mennonite Central Committee, the French Government, Australia's Community Aid Abroad, and Somaliland communities in Norway and Abidjan. See, *Consolidation and Decentralization of Government Institutions. Hargeysa, Somaliland: Academy for Peace and Development, 2002*. Print.; Renders, Marleen. "Appropriate 'governance-Technology'?: Somali Clan Elders and Institutions in the Making of the 'republic of Somaliland'." *Afrika Spectrum*. (2007): 439-459. Print. Farah, Ahmed Y, and I M. Lewis. *Somalia, the Roots of Reconciliation: Peace Making Endeavours of Contemporary Lineage Leaders : a Survey of Grassroots Peace Confernces in "Somaliland"*. London: International Division, Resource Centre, ACTIONAID London, 1993. Print.
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Development in Africa 14 (2012); Clark, Phil. *How Rwanda Judged Its Genocide*. Africa Research Institute, 2012.

⁷⁴ Mwambari, D., A. Muteru, B. Walsh, I. Bugingo, T. Munyaneza and F. Olonisakin. "Trajectories of State Building and Peace Building in Rwanda." *Proceedings of the Review and Validation Workshop, April 18-19*. Nairobi: African Leadership Centre, n.pag. 2016.

⁷⁵ Identities in pre-colonial Rwanda would shift as one social (wealth) status changed. For example one would become a Tutsi in the event a Hutu or Twa acquired more than ten head of cattle, or if favoured by the King and given a Tutsi bride. The reverse was also possible. *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 9-13.

⁷⁷ The issues include management of land; organization of central and local administration, restoration and consolidation of national identity and unity; settlement of refugees and returning their property especially land and rebuilding their homes; development and improvement of living conditions of the people and solving the social problems that resulted from war and genocide; revival of the country's economy; redefinition of the foreign policy; and consolidation of participatory democracy. *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁸ Beswick, Danielle. "Aiding State Building and Sacrificing Peace Building? the Rwanda-uk Relationship 1994-2011." *Third World Quarterly*. 32.10 (2011): 1911-1930. Print.

⁷⁹ The post-genocide government has enabled for the society both the elite and ordinary people of the society to have collective national conversations including those on identity and political leadership. See Mwambari et al., *Op.Cit.*, 72. Tom, Goodfellow. "Rwanda's Political Settlement and the Urban Transition: Expropriation, Construction and Taxation in Kigali." *Journal of Eastern African Studies*. 8.2 (2014): 311-329; Purdekova, A. "'Even If I Am Not Here, There Are so Many Eyes': Surveillance and State Reach in Rwanda." *Journal of Modern African Studies*. 49.3 (2011): 475-497; Reyntjens, Filip. "Rwanda, ten years on: from genocide to dictatorship." *African affairs* 103.411 (2004): 177-210;

⁸⁰ For a detailed discussion see Mwambari et al., *Op.Cit.*, 73-76.

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⁹¹ Jumah, Adusei Sierra Leone: As seen through international economic and social indicators. New York: UNDP, 2009. Internet Resource.

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⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

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- ⁹⁶ *Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey, 2008*. Freetown: SSL, 2008. Web. See also *Ibid.*, 42-43.
- ⁹⁷ Jumah, *Sierra Leone*, (note 90)
- ⁹⁸ Richards, Paul. *Rebellion in Liberia and Sierra Leone: A Crisis of Youth?* The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 1993. Print. Abdullah, Ibrahim. "The Lumpen Proletariat and the Sierra Leone Conflict." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36.2 (1998).
- ⁹⁹ Although a significant number of young people expressed optimism with the current avenues that enable political participation, they nonetheless still experience exclusion in electoral processes especially at local level. See Ikpe, *et al.*, *Building The "State"* 19-20 (note 91) For a broader discussion on youth issues in Sierra Leone see. Ismail, Wale, *et al.* "Youth vulnerability and exclusion (YOVEX) in West Africa: synthesis report." *Conflict, Security and Development Group Paper* 21 (2009)..
- ¹⁰⁰ Jumah, *Sierra Leone*, (note 90) .
- ¹⁰¹ Alao, Abiodun, and Comfort Ero. "Cut Short for Taking Short Cuts: the Lomé Peace Agreement on Sierra Leone." *Civil Wars*. 4.3 (2001): 117-134. Print.
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