

Governance, Security and Conflict Resolution in Africa

Peter Anyang' Nyong'o

In our book, *Arms and Daggers in the Heart of Africa*,¹ Michael Olisa noted that external intervention in an internal conflict could be problematic even if carried out on humanitarian grounds. All sides of the conflict must see the intervening force as indeed neutral for it to succeed in its mission. The conflicting forces must also accept, separately and individually, that intervention is in their interest. In turn, the act of intervention must be precise and clear in objective, with the capability to be implemented in accordance with a program endorsed by all parties.

There are many conflicts in Africa where external intervention has failed because the conditions that Olisa spelt out were not met. Soon after independence the Congo faced a major internal conflict in which the United Nations Organization intervened with disastrous consequences. Patrice Lumumba, the then Prime Minister of the Congo, was arrested by his opponents and assassinated – an action which did more to enhance the conflicts rather than create conditions for their solution. Not long after that the UN Secretary General perished in the jungles of the Congo after a plane crash. It was never known whether the plane was shot down or came down accidentally. The end result, however, was that it left the UN rudderless in charting its ways through the Congo crisis. The Congo never actually recovered in spite of more than three decades of military dictatorship under Mobutu Sese Seku. The current conflicts in the Congo could be traced to those years of failed external intervention followed by a long period of bad governance.

The recent conflicts in Somalia that saw the intervention of the UN – with strong backing from the U.S. government – failed for

almost similar reasons. Following the collapse of the Siad Barre dictatorship, and the disintegration of the Somali State, the warring factions had little appreciation for external intervention. Whatever military force came from outside could not subjugate the guerilla fighters intent on curving territory for themselves at the cost of thousands of human lives. The external intervention came at a time when there was no central power in Mogandishu, almost in the same way that there was no central power in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) at the time of the Congo crisis. The end result in the case of Somalia has been continued disintegration while in the Congo at least a military dictatorship emerged to impose some kind of order on society for some time.

In the case of Liberia and the ECOMOG² intervention, Olisa noted that the objective was that of peace keeping: to try and re-establish order and peace in Liberia after the break up of an internal conflict which included the assassination of the former president Samuel Kenyon Doe. The intervention was immediately contested on the grounds that the Organization of African Unity – and not ECOMOG – had a more legitimate role in attempting to solve the crisis, hence the ECOMOG was contravening the OAU *Charter* by moving into Liberia without the sanction of the OAU. Further, it was argued that ECOMOG had no justification to go into Liberia without being invited by an internal and legitimate authority. Even the ECOWAS members themselves were not unanimous regarding ECOMOG's intervention; hence this intervention could be construed as opportunism bordering on imperialist expansionism taking advantage of the internal weaknesses in a neighboring state.

All that notwithstanding, as in the case of Somalia, Olisa observed that there was no legitimate authority to invite anybody into Liberia after Doe had rigged the election. The OAU, on its part, had hardly demonstrated the capacity to intervene successfully in such situations. Its earlier attempts to do so in Chad ended up in a fiasco. ECOMOG, whatever controversy surrounded its initial move, was merely filling up a vacuum and doing a job that had to be done. It was a choice between putting an end to a blood bath or dithering with legal niceties and the dots and comas in international law.

Although ECOMOG managed to put an interim government in place soon after its intervention, this government never managed to establish authority in the whole of the Liberian territory. The existence of three different seats of power was to be the basis of an extended and protracted internal conflict in Liberia, which could not easily be handled nor settled by ECOMOG's intervention. Much later, with some internal accord that led the conflicting parties to a general election, did the parties to the conflict agree to put down arms and let "the choice of the people" determine who had the authority to exercise political power in Liberia. Whatever the shortcomings of the Liberian elections, the fact that the parties to the conflict agreed to participate in elections as a peaceful mechanism for conflict resolution and the means to forming a legitimate government is important.

Having carefully documented the genesis and evolution of the internal conflicts in Rwanda, Dixon Kamukama³ concludes that there is need for regional, continental, and international bodies/organizations to assist Rwanda in addressing the problem of conflicts. The conflicts in Rwanda, he notes well before the genocide of 1994 and the civil war that followed, have now assumed an international character by the rebels invading Congo with the backing of Rwanda and Uganda. Kamukama had observed that neighboring countries – all members of the OAU – would of necessity be drawn into the Rwandan conflict and they will eventually have to formulate a solution that would be regional in character.

The assumption was that parties to the Rwandan conflict would finally accept external intervention as a legitimate way of settling internal conflicts. External intervention of a humanitarian nature was, of course, largely accepted. But when intervention involves cessation of hostilities and determination as to who is to exercise legitimate authority, parties to the conflict are often more than cautious to engage in a process of negotiations under the aegis of external forces.

Conflicts within African states can no longer be regarded as purely internal affairs. This is the situation in which the region of the Great Lakes, as the epicenter of political instability in the whole of the Horn of Africa, central as well as eastern Africa, finds itself. Certain so-called external forces do not really regard them-

selves as external. Both Rwanda and Uganda, for example, see the internal conflict in Congo as not so internal. Any government in Kinshasa which antagonizes the Tutsi population in Congo will send refugees fleeing into Rwanda. This, obviously, would destabilize Rwanda. Further, following the plight of Rwandan Hutu refugees in Congo after the genocide, the present Rwandan government looks with suspicion at any regime in Kinshasa which is likely to be partial to these refugees, and to support their ambition of waging an armed struggle against the Kigali government. Uganda, having hosted many Rwandan refugees over the last three decades, is also interested in political stability in Rwanda and a situation which would not lead to the outflow of Rwandans into Uganda.

Tanzania, with regard to Burundi, is in the same position as Uganda is to Rwanda and Rwanda is to Tanzania. Burundi is not only one of the poorest nations in Africa but it also one of the most densely populated. The land locked population of 5.5 million people depend almost exclusively on subsistence agriculture. The two export crops, coffee and tea, earn Burundi just enough money to keep the small economy interacting with the modern world. The ethnic composition – 80 percent Hutu and 20 percent Tutsi – has been the source of historical problems as the Tutsi minority have almost always dominated political and economic life since independence. The unexpected change in 1986 which saw the election of the first Hutu president – M. Ndadaye – led the Tutsi into a panic, fearing Hutu revenge after many years of being under minority domination. The fact that the Tutsi still dominated the army was a great risk and threat to the Ndadaye government. It is no wonder, therefore, that on 21 October 1993, Tutsi soldiers mounted a coup in which Ndadaye was assassinated and about 700,000 Hutus driven into exile, mainly into Tanzania.

The Burundi crisis is a typical case of internal conflicts arising from bad governance based on ethnic minority rule and fear. The “occupation” of governmental institutions through ethnic demarcation itself also leads to the inherent instability of such governments, with political insecurity and fear leading to violent conflicts. When neighbors are subsequently affected by such conflicts leading to refugee outflows, then it is not realistic for such

neighbors to be indifferent to the conflicts. They must seek not only to be involved in stopping the conflicts when they occur, but also in creating political and economic conditions that would prevent such conflicts from occurring.

We therefore want to advance the thesis that in order to have effective mechanisms for conflict prevention as well as resolution, parties to conflicts should accept to discuss and agree on issues of governance as fundamental to conflict resolution. These issues of governance cannot be settled as if they are “purely internal matters.” The so-called “no interference in the internal affairs of the state” cannot serve as a viable principle in international relations in Africa where the construction of the state has itself created conflicts, which cannot – by their very nature – be settled purely within the borders of the state.

The issue of Tutsi-Hutu relationship in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo go beyond the borders of each of these states. The presence of Hutu refugees in Tanzania is a product of internal conflicts in Burundi. The presence of Hutu refugees in Congo is the outcome of conflicts in Rwanda. Neither Congo nor Tanzania can deal with the refugee problem within their borders without addressing the issues of governance in the neighboring countries from where the Hutus are forced to emigrate. Further, were these countries to insist that they cannot accept refugees from their neighbors, the same neighbors would complain that their peoples are not being given the proper humanitarian treatment they need when they are faced with human rights issues within their own states. It is therefore necessary to recognize that all these issues of governance, security, and conflict resolution, in such contexts, need to be conceived and dealt with *regionally*.

The *regionalization* of conflict resolution, promotion of security and good governance has been recognized in the *Draft Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community*.⁴ In this draft treaty, the partner states agree that peace and security are prerequisites to social and economic development within the Community and vital to the achievement of the objectives of the Community. In this regard, the partner states enjoin themselves to foster and maintain an atmosphere that is conducive to peace and security through cooperation and consultations on issues pertaining to

peace and security of the partner states with a view to preventing, better managing, and resolving disputes and conflicts between them. Further, they undertake to promote and maintain good neighborliness as a basis for promoting peace and security within the Community; this includes such issues as refugees and disaster management.⁵

The *Draft Treaty* further envisages a rapid progression towards a political federation by the three founding member states in East Africa: that is Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. There is, however, provision that other neighboring states can join the Community or the Federation provided they adhere to the articles of accession, which establish, among other things, respect for good governance and peaceful resolution of conflicts. The essence of this is that, while the nation-state is being superceded as a viable framework for further social progress, it is also being seen as inadequate for preventing and managing conflicts.

Lenin once argued that in nation-states comprising several nationalities, each nationality has the democratic right of self-determination whose exercise may include cessation when necessary.⁶ Lenin further qualified this statement that the class character of self-determination must be clearly determined. In so far as the bourgeoisie is the dominant and ruling class in the nation-state, it may seek to use self-determination to pursue purely selfish and chauvinistic ends or it may use it to fight a progressive cause. Thus the proletariat must always only give the bourgeoisie *conditional support* on the national question.

What every bourgeoisie is out for in the national question is either privileges for its own nation, or exceptional advantages for it; this is called being "practical." The proletariat is opposed to all privileges, to all exclusiveness. To demand that it should be "practical" means following the lead of the bourgeoisie, falling into opportunism.⁷

It was therefore not a question of supporting all calls for self-determination all the time but of supporting them in terms of their social and political *content*. In general, bourgeois nationalism would always be a nationalism to protect the class privileges of the bourgeoisie, and not a nationalism to promote universal principles of social and economic justice and equality. In the anticolonial struggles, however, bourgeois and proletarian nationalism coin-

cides, the oppressor being the common enemy. Insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, the proletariat and all other oppressed classes will support the bourgeoisie almost unconditionally. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for its own bourgeois nationalism to protect, for example, its economic privileges in a world capitalist system, the proletariat and other subordinate classes need to stand against such nationalism in support for proletarian internationalism.⁸

Lenin's arguments may sound outdated in an era where there is a growing assumption that class divisions within nation-states are not that sharp, and that the economies of nation-states tend to draw the bourgeoisie and the proletariat towards a common front. This is very far from the truth in examining the character of internal conflicts in Africa, which arise from both nationality questions and controversies over class privileges.

If we take, for example, the problems in Rwanda, Lenin's thesis would be soundly vindicated. Just before the taking over of state power by the Rwandese Patriotic Front led by Paul Kagame and his team, the Hutu dominated government of Habyalimana led a chauvinistic campaign whose ideology was based on hatred for the Tutsi. The administration resuscitated the "caste" campaign in a bid to emotionally rally the Bahutu⁹ together against a *traditionally oppressive superior caste*. They presented the RPF as a force intent to restore the old monarchical structure that favored the Tutsi. The RPF, on the other hand, was advancing a class campaign, which was pointing out the fact that Rwanda has classes, which were oppressed no matter their nationality. As Kamukama noted, "*their problem is not the Bahutu, but a corrupt, oppressive, and discriminative state. They hope that with time they will co-exist amicably with the people, prove to them that contrary to the state propaganda, they are good people with the sole motive of liberating Rwanda.*"¹⁰

To demonstrate that the RPF stand was a threat to the Hutu ruling class in Rwanda, it is to be noted that the regime murdered in cold blood any Hutu who was found to be sympathizing with or supporting the sentiments of the RPF. Thus a good number of the Hutu middle class, regarded as liberals by the regime, were eliminated under the suspicion that *they were likely to be sympathetic to the RPF*. It is in this context that the Hutu Prime Minister, having

called for reforms which would avert further internal conflicts, was herself assassinated by her own government on the eve of the RPF takeover.¹¹

Uganda's support for the RPF incursions into and eventual takeover of the state in Rwanda was also interpreted in a contradictory manner within the region. There are those who saw support for the RPF as Museveni's expansionist policies in the region. On the other hand there are those who saw it as a legitimate support for a force that could liberate the Rwandese from oppression. The social and political program that the RPF has pursued since taking over power has demonstrated that it is more interested in democratizing society than imposing yet another oppressive and chauvinistic regime on the Rwandan people. The manner in which the regime has treated its political prisoners and the perpetrators of the genocide demonstrates its civility and commitment to the Rule of Law. Indeed, the fact that the trial of the perpetrators of genocide is being conducted in Arusha under the authority of the United Nations underlies the importance of the *regionalization* of internal conflicts and their resolution in Africa.

It is perhaps too early to assess the successes or failures of the RPF in Rwanda. But the manner in which the crisis in the Congo is resolved may depend very much on how persuasive the case of the RPF is to the warring factions within the region. The *Rassemblement Democratique Congolais*, the insurgent movement led by Wamba dia Wamba and challenging the Kabila regime, has made a similar argument as the RPF did. It sees itself as a liberation movement, seeking to establish democracy in Congo. The NRM in Uganda, the RPF in Rwanda, and the ANC in South Africa have recognized it. In its pronouncements from Goma, it commits itself to a social transformation of society based on the rule of law, promotion of human rights, eradication of all forms of authoritarianism in society, and the end of social bigotry of all sorts. Kabila's short stint in government reveals very little difference with Mobutuism, which he sought to eliminate.

Good intentions, by themselves, are not enough to persuade the Congolese people that the RDC is the only option from Kabila.

Indeed, the propaganda from Kinshasa that the RDC wants to impose a Tutsi dominated regime on the other Congolese acts as a strong deterrence against the political advancement of the RDC as it campaigns to win the hearts and minds of the people. Further, in a context where both forces are relying more on arms to advance and defend their cause, the Congolese people may find it difficult to tell the difference between the two. Who is using arms to advance a noble cause and who is using them to oppress the people? Should the armed conflict continue for too long, the destruction caused might leave the people so demoralized that their faith in any form of government may be totally eroded.

It is for this reason that recent attempts to bring the parties to the conflict to round-table negotiations are important. It is recognized that, however noble their intentions are, the RDC may find it very difficult to dislodge Kabila from power even in the short run. Given the underdevelopment of Congo, even were they to dislodge him, creating political order where too many groups have had access to guns will be a daunting task. The longer the war occurs the more likely it will be for more routes to be mined, more bridges destroyed, and more towns left destroyed. The cases of both Angola and southern Sudan are still glaring Africa in the face.

One of the major problems of trying to create any viable administrative mechanism in Angola is the *land mine menace*. After over three decades of civil war, Angola is so land-mined that traveling in that country is very hazardous. Agricultural work, road construction, forestation, and many other productive activities are threatened by this land mine menace. The same could be true of certain parts of southern Sudan. In both countries, many innocent people have been maimed as a result of tripping over the land mines left without being detonated after several years of civil war. To remove the land mines requires financial investment and technical assistance that will, of course, be yet another diversion of scarce resources needed for social and economic reconstruction.

It is with the above in mind that what is currently stipulated in the *Draft Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community* is important. While attempts to promote regional integration and regional conflict resolution are laudable, they need to be assessed with regard to the principles under which they will be imple-

mented. Conflicts arise as a result of unresolved grievances. Such grievances need not necessarily be resolved to the satisfaction of the contending parties simply because they are regionalized. That is why Lenin laid so much emphasis on the political and social content of any program and the class character of nationalism. It is equally important to note that the movement towards regionalism, and the faith in it as a road toward better ways of conflict resolution, social and economic transformation, and good governance need to be seen in terms of the interests it will defend and promote. The professionals, workers, and peasants, organized in civil society, need to find avenues of expression that will put their interests on the agenda of projects and programs in regional initiatives.

The problem of "creating political order" is important. The benchmark for deciding whether or not certain political claims within the nation or region are to be regarded as legitimate must be related to the kind of political order that we think will best be sorted for resolving conflicts that arise out of such claims. As far as the history that we are aware of, democracy offers the most appropriate political order known to humankind. The long-term strategy in resolving conflicts in Africa must therefore be predicated upon the regionalization of democracy as well as conflict resolution.⁹

ARTICLE SYNOPSIS IN DHULUO

Lwenje mang'eny magore e Afrika Madiere, moloyo to e pinje kaka Rwanda, Burundi nyaka Kongo, nyalo mana rumo ka jopiny obedo gi buche mag thegruok moriwo ji duto. Kindegi nenre ni ei piny ka piny, nitie jogo maok owinjore gi sirkal. Mani timre nikech sirikande mang'eny e Afrika kani osebet mag achune kendo maok oyier gi jopiny e yo maler.

Ekinde mokadhogo, nene wandiko buk moro miluongo gi dho wagunda ni *Arms and Daggers in the Heart of Africa*. E bugni nene

wawacho ni goruok mosebedie Afrika kani en nikech laro gik mang'eny e kind ogendini mopogre opogre. Nyaka wang'e ni ka wadwaro kwe to nyaka wachaki gi loso piny e yo manyalo kelo dak e kind ji maber. Ji onego ng'e ni mwandu piny ok en mar oganda ni kata oganda cha, to en mar ji duto kaka jogo matiyo kaachiel ni gero piny gi. Ma ema omiyo sirkal mar *demokrasia* ber mohingo sirikande moko ma ji oseng'eyo.

Dwaher wacho ni a Afrika Madiere kani koro wadwaro sirkal moriwo ji duto mondo okel kwe gi dongruok. Wase thagre kinde mang'eny ka waparo ni akwede nyalo konyowa. Ok onyal. Onego wabed gi winjuok mar tiyo kaachiel kaka ogendni mopogore man gi sirkal achiel mar Afrika mangima.

Notes

1. P. Anyang' Nyong'o (ed.), *Arms and Daggers in the Heart of Africa* (Nairobi, 1993).
2. ECOMOG: ECOWAS Monitoring Group; ECOWAS: Economic Communities of West Africa States.
3. Dixon Kamukama, "Pride and Prejudice in Ethnic Relations: Rwanda," in Anyang' Nyong'o, pp. 133-60.
4. Secretariat of the Permanent Tripartite Commission for East African Cooperation, *Draft Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community*, Arusha International Conference Center, 1998.
5. *Draft Treaty*, Article 122.
6. V.I. Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Vol. 1, *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 599-654.
7. Lenin, pp. 613-14.
8. Lenin, p. 615.
9. The Hutu people.
10. Kamukama, "Pride and Prejudice," p. 155.
11. This was the case of Mrs. Agathe Uwilingiyimana, who began her position in 1993; she was assassinated in her home on 7 April 1994.
12. A. Zolberg, *Creating Political Order* (Princeton, 1967).