



Achieving Lasting Peace: Dynamics, Resolutions, and Ethnic Reconciliation in Sub-Saharan Africa

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ABSTRACT- This paper will comprehensively understand ethnic conflicts in the region and explore the strategies to achieve sustainable peace.

The following research questions will guide the course of this research-

- What are the drivers and dynamics of conflicts in the Sub-Saharan Africa?
- What lessons can be taken from the previous measures taken to bring peace?
- Which theoretical framework is suitable to explain the Sub-Saharan African conflict and its resolution? The paper will begin by giving a background of conflicts, their context, and the current situation. It will then examine the case studies of different conflicts. Finally, the paper will discuss the policy measures and recommendations that might be suitable for sustainable peace and addressing ethnic conflicts.

Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa has continuously been in the grip of ethnic conflicts fueled by historical grievances, competition for resources, and lack of political manipulation. These conflicts have caused huge devastation to human lives, have cost more than billions, and have put the region's development in the backseat due to continuous armed conflict. Attaining sustainable peace in the region has become an urgent need. The region needs to explore viable resolutions and ultimately achieve sustainable peace by undertaking crucial endeavors.

In the last decade, violence related to terrorist and extremist groups like Al Qaeda and Daesh has increased rapidly across the region. According to the 2022 Global terrorism index, developed by leading international think tank the Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP), Sub-Saharan Africa has emerged as the global epicenter of terrorism. Sub-Saharan Africa has contributed to 48% of global terrorism deaths. Islamic State (IS) has replaced the Taliban as the world's deadliest terror group in 2021 in the region, with 15 deaths per attack in Niger.¹

According to the Institute for Economics and Peace's Global Peace Index 2022, five out of the ten least peaceful countries included the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. In addition to this, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Somalia marked among the top ten countries most impacted by terrorism.² Multiple coups were staged in 2020-22 including coups in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Sudan, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, and Niger.

Dynamics of Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to diverse ethnicities with their own unique cultural, historical, linguistic, and religious identity. While diversity presents an opportunity for ethnic groups, it also presents challenges in political, economic, and social spheres along with ethnic conflicts.

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- What lessons can be taken from the previous measures taken to bring peace?
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Background on Ethnic Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa has viewed quite a tumultuous history inflicted by colonial powers and external interferences till 20th century.

Sub-Saharan Africa has witnessed a tumultuous history shaped by colonial powers and external interferences until the 20th century. Modern concept of defined boundaries did not exist in pre-colonial Africa. In place of boundaries, three types of frontiers existed – enclaves with overlapping groups, frontiers of contact where different groups coexisted and frontiers of separation where different communities existed but with a buffer zone in between to avoid any conflict and give communities their space to flourish. For example, the Masai and Tuareg as enclaves, Yoruba states and Dahomey as frontiers of contact, and Central Sudan states like Bornu with frontiers of separation. These frontiers varied depending on geographical features like forests and deserts, and some communities did not recognize the

concept of frontiers at all. This ensured that every community had their different leaders and leadership was elected with the consent of the members.³

The colonial boundaries in Africa were drawn during Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, which officially marked the starting of phase 'scramble of Africa' and whole continent was partitioned and divided among European powers. The process of division was characterized by tussle between Britain, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Belgium and Italy to claim control over African territory.⁴ During and after the conference, European countries sent their envoys, soldiers to carry out persuasion, coercion, and bribery to force, influence and entice African leaders to sign treaty and agreements, willingly or unwillingly ceding territory to European powers. Chiefs of the communities were laden with gifts such as beads, cloths, or alcohol. Many rulers, unable to resist European political encroachment, found themselves incapable of matching the military might of European powers. As a result, attempts to resist colonization came too late for many African leaders, and they were effectively subdued by European military superiority.⁵

Most importantly, colonial powers drew borders that frequently divided cohesive ethnic groups across multiple countries or placed them with rival ethnic groups. This created a race of autonomy over resources, race in political representation, and a sense of cultural upper hand over states with mixed ethnicities as communities found themselves dealing with marginalization and oppressive policies of state or post-colonial government structure.

Another factor that fueled ethnic tensions or gave birth to new fault lines was the policy of favoritism by the ruling government. The bias of government for one group over others in any sector created resentment among people and that laid the groundwork for future conflicts as post-independence states struggled to find a haven for their community and interests.

The Rwandan Genocide in 1994 was fueled by longstanding ethnic tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi communities. The colonial legacy of favoritism towards Tutsis by Belgian authorities exacerbated these tensions. After independence, political favoritism towards Tutsis under certain regimes heightened resentment among the Hutu majority, ultimately leading to the genocide.

Ethnic tensions have been a significant issue in Kenyan politics. The political elite often manipulate ethnic affiliations to maintain power. The government's favoritism towards certain ethnic groups in resource allocation, public appointments, and development projects has fueled resentment and periodic outbreaks of violence, such as the post-election violence in 2007-2008.

Sub-Saharan Africa has also been affected by neo-colonialism, where external powers specifically great powers or multinational giants try to capture, control, and manipulate the resources present in the region or the ruling party by meddling with the internal politics and helping in electing the suitable party leader for their benefits. This, in turn, promoted inequality, fostered corruption, and undermined the democratic institutions of the country including the government itself.

The DRC has been a victim of neo-colonial exploitation due to its abundant mineral resources. External powers and multinational corporations have historically interfered in Congolese politics to exploit these resources. The backing of certain leaders by foreign entities has led to corruption, conflict, and the undermining of democratic processes in the country.

Causes of Ethnic Conflict

Multiple factors contributed to the ethnic conflicts in the region-

Political Factors: Ethnic conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa have often been driven by struggles for control over power. Different ethnic groups fought over access to political power, government offices, resource distribution, and decision-making authority fueling tensions in the particular territory which resulted in violence. The incidents of violence and power struggle-related conflicts have been commonly cited in places where political institutions are weak and not able to address the conflict in motion. The conflict in the northeastern DRC in the Ituri district, erupted in early 2000s was fueled by competition and race to exert control over gold mines. Ethnic militias including Lendu and Hema, tried to establish their dominance in the region, which led to widespread violence and migration of civilians from the area.

Economic Factors: Economic factors are related to resource allocation and ownership. Economic disparities appear when resources in a nation are not distributed evenly or a single community has a handful of resources. Other factors also include the lack of creation of opportunities by the government and failure in the resolution of land and resource ownership grievances. These factors can exacerbate ethnic tensions and escalate any kind of conflict. Non-availability or unequal distribution of public services, discrimination, and stereotypes perpetuated by social institutions also contributed to inter-group animosities and conflict.

For example: Conflict which erupted in Central African Republic and escalated in 2013, involved different local militias fighting to get control over diamond mines in the region. The rebel groups majorly included Muslim Seleka rebels and Christian militias known as the Anti-balaka. Their tussle resulted in widespread violence, displacement of large amount of people and human rights violations.

Cultural Factors: Ethnic conflict may be fueled by cultural or religious variations in the region with the presence of different ethnicities. This factor is often manipulated by political elites and extremist factors of society who try to manipulate extremist ideology and support violent agendas.⁶

Ever Since the conflict has started in DRC in 1996, around 6 million people have died. The First Congo war (1996- 1997), emerged from the Rwandan genocide in which Hutu extremists targeted Tutsis and Moderate Hutus. This led to a large influx of refugees in DRC, which not only included asylum seekers but also organized militias backed by Rwandan government. Rwanda, under the leadership of President Paul Kagame invaded Zaire (now DRC) to eliminate the threat to its Tutsi population and cross Hutu extremists supported by Mobutu Sese Seko's regime. Thousands died in the conflict, including former militants, refugees, and Congolese civilians, with brutal tactics employed. Kabila became president, renaming the country The Democratic Republic of Congo.

Prominent Ethnic Conflicts in the Region in the 20th and 21st Century

This paper will look into the ethnic conflicts of 4 countries, i.e., the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Burundi. These countries have experienced severe conflicts in the 20th and 21st centuries. The paper will delve into a comparative analysis of these countries, the conflict, and how it differed from the other.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Colonial legacy left behind exploitation, arbitrary borders, and power structures dominated by ethnicities which ultimately brought unstable government and post-independence instability and authoritarian rule added to the existing fault lines. Competition for vast mineral resources present in the region including gold, diamonds, etc. increased with the formation of a weak government structure as the government was incapable of solving internal conflicts and recognizing and stopping external interference from neighbors as well as countries that had geopolitical interests in the region.

⁶ *Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo | Global Conflict Tracker.* (n.d.). Global Conflict Tracker.

One of the ways in which DRC can reduce the Faultline and bring reforms in the government structure is by transitioning from unitary government to federal system of government. This can happen by establishing government at lower levels also and then delegating the powers for effective administration. This would also involve revising the constitution of the country to avoid concentration of power in the hands of one government and effective distribution at all levels. enhance checks and balances, and safeguard fundamental rights and freedoms.

Rwandan Genocide (1994)

Conflict in Rwanda has its roots deep-seated between Hutu and Tutsi groups. The division between Hutu and Tutsi became more prominent and highlighted during the colonial period when Belgians in Rwanda and the Germans in Burundi initiated a new system of ethnic identity cards, codifying and rigidifying the distinctions between the two groups.

Rwanda was under Belgian control, which while exploiting country's resources and labor force, reinforced Tutsi's control over crucial resources and excluded Hutus from the position of influence, power and education. However, this policy of Belgian power sowed the seeds of one of the worst ethnic conflicts by conflict by marginalizing a significant portion of the population.

Later on, with the increasing pressure of UN to settle and address colonial biases and injustices, Belgians made some adjustments and introduced limited reforms that resulted in minimal participation by Hutus in the public life.

Hutus, dissatisfied with the reforms, tried to seize the control of the political system before colonial powers withdrew completely. The Hutu revolution was driven by various factors, reflecting the needs and demands of the community suffering since long time. This revolution led to overthrow of Tutsi community led monarchy and established Republic led by Hutu elites.

However, this change in power did not last long and led to ethnic tensions in the country that later on converted into genocide.⁷

South Sudan

- **Historical Roots:** Sudan's long civil war with the marginalization of South Sudan was fueled by ethnic and religious differences between Christians and Arab- Muslims. Another factor that contributed to the tensions was the unequal development.
- **Drivers:** The separation of South Sudan in 2011 did not contribute much to ending the conflict. Competition for power specifically over resources like oil fueled conflict among ethnic groups (primarily Dinka and Nuer), resulting in civil war.
- **The Complexities:** Along with ethnicity and resources, shifting alliances and fractured leadership among rebel groups played a major role in making political solutions viable for the country.^{8,9,10,11}

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005, arranged with international support brought eventual independence for Sudan. However, despite hopes for peace and stability following independence, South Sudan quickly descended into its own internal conflicts, primarily along ethnic lines, exacerbated by struggles for power, resources, and control over oil revenues.

United States played a significant role in making CPA a reality that technically put an end to two decades of civil war between Sudanese government and Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Army (SPLM/A). CPA, without a doubt reduced the attacks against civilians in south but this comprehensive agreement also included provisions for revenue sharing from oil, disarmament initiatives and democratic elections which couldn't be fulfilled and thus couldn't fulfil its aim to resolve the conflict.¹²

In April 2023, conflict between two rival armed forces broke out in Sudanese capital Khartoum. The reason behind the conflict lied in the power struggle between Sudanese Armed forces and paramilitary group called Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The two groups are fighting over for control over the state and the resources such as oil fields.¹³

Burundi

- **Historical Roots:** Burundi and Rwanda share the same communities- Hutus and Tutsis, which resulted in tension and violence between both communities. The conflict was exacerbated by discriminatory policies by successive regimes.
- **Drivers:** Similar factors to Rwanda, Political instability, different rounds of violence, and power struggles led to fears of minority domination and resulted in repeated episodes of ethnic violence.
- **The Complexities:** Burundi's conflict is influenced by regional tensions, cross-border dynamics with Rwanda, and unresolved grievances regarding power and representation.
- Burundi experienced political instability after its independence in 1962 featured by successive assassinations, power struggles and ethnic tensions. Tutsis historically had more power and this led to grievances among Hutus. Both Hutus and Tutsis engaged in different propaganda campaigns, fueling animosity and deepening mistrust between two groups.
- Ethnic tensions in neighboring Rwanda also had spillover effects on the actions in Burundi. The Rwandan Genocide in 1994 increased fears and tensions among Burundi's ethnic groups, contributing to the escalation of violence.

Comparative Analysis of the turmoil In African states

The state and its institutions play a major role in resolving, managing, and preventing any conflict. However, newly independent states in Africa were marked by weak and corrupt states, often backed by external powers to get control over resources. These states often

needed more capacity and capability to effectively address the grievances of the people, manage resources, and ensure security and ensure security of resources as well diverse set of people. One of the reasons for the conflict in all four states was the presence of weaker states with failed institutions that contributed to the escalation and perpetuation of ethnic conflicts.

In DRC, the central government overlooked and failed to assert control over its vast territory allowing small militias to rise and thrive and ultimately become powerful enough to topple the existing government exploit the power vacuum, and perpetrate violence over the region.

Another reason for exacerbated tensions in the region was corruption- within the state institutions. This fostered inequalities within the resource distribution system and accelerated grievances of the particular section of the community. In South Sudan and Burundi, corruption within the government structure contributed to economic disparities and resulted in resentment among people, undermining their trust in them.

Authoritarian governments often accelerated ethnic tensions by brutally suppressing dissent and silencing marginalized group's voices often due to their ethnicities. In Rwanda, President Juvenal Habyarimana and his ruling party, the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND) characterized by centralized control, repression of political opposition, and discrimination against the Tutsi minority.

Habyarimana's government established a one-party state, with the MRND as the sole legal political party. This effectively eliminated any political competition and centralized political power within the party. the government had full control over media and ensured that all the media channels are propagating the ideology of the ruling party. The government also implemented the ethnic identity cards for the classification of members of different communities. Government has also adopted discriminatory hiring practices, discrimination at educational institutions and indiscriminate land distribution. Opposition parties were not allowed and were intimidated with threats.

Propaganda and Dehumanization: Government-controlled media outlets, including radio stations like Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), played a significant role in disseminating anti-Tutsi propaganda and dehumanizing the Tutsi population in Rwanda. Hutu extremists used hate speech and misinformation to portray Tutsis as enemies of the state, scapegoating them for the country's social and economic problems.

Gender Dynamics in Ethnic Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa

● Rwandan Genocide (1994)

The Rwandan genocide in 1994 witnessed the use of sexual violence as a systematic tool for targeting the Tutsi community's female members. Rape and sexual violence were perpetrated on a massive scale by Hutu extremists to execute ethnic cleansing of the Tutsi population. The use of sexual violence during the genocide was widespread and orchestrated with the extremists, militias, as well as civilians present.

Sexual violence is often used as a weapon of war and genocide with the aim of meddling with the social fabric of society by targeting women and children. This is also used to psychologically and physically assert power and dominance over the members of one community. Survivors frequently reported being subjected to multiple rapes by multiple perpetrators, often in full view of family members.

The physical and psychological impact of sexual violence on survivors of the Rwandan genocide has been profound and long-lasting. Many survivors suffered severe physical injuries, including internal injuries, sexually transmitted infections, and unwanted pregnancies. The psychological trauma of rape has also had lasting effects, with survivors experiencing depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health issues.

One of the survivors of Rwandan Genocide shared her story about she coped up with the genocide and aftermath. Consolée Nishimwe, 32, survived the 1994 genocide in Rwanda as a teenager. In her words, *"I still remember how scared my parents were, but as children, my siblings and I thought the mayhem would stop soon but that was not the case. We spent three months hiding in many different places and during this period many of my family members were murdered — including my father, my three brothers, my grandparents, my uncles, and many friends. My father was the first person to be killed, followed by my brothers. During the time we were hiding, I was among the many girls who were raped and, unfortunately, I contracted HIV as a result. It was very hard for me. I can't find words to describe how I felt. I never thought I would be a normal teenager again."*¹⁴

Despite the widespread use of sexual violence against Tutsi women, the alleged perpetrators faced limited accountability for their crimes. In most of the cases, the individuals responsible for such heinous crimes were freed based on lack of evidence and efforts by the administration. Survivors faced stigmatization and intimidation by the perpetrators and other members of the community.

● First Sudanese Civil War (1955-1972) and Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005)

These prolonged conflicts between the north and south of Sudan had a profound impact on women, who faced displacement, violence, and limited access to healthcare and education. Despite these challenges, women actively participated in peace talks and reconciliation efforts. Some of the activists who have worked actively for the region are mentioned below-

Astur is a supporter for women's rights and a writer. She is one of the founders of the Women's Awareness Initiative in the Blue Nile region, which promotes the active participation and leadership of women and girls and opposes gender-based violence. On 16 April 2023, she established the "Mothers of Sudan" campaign opposing the ongoing war in Sudan, and she organized the first women's protest against the war, held in Khartoum on 23 April. The Mothers of Sudan initiative mobilizes citizens to oppose the war, exert pressure on individuals and military leaders, and contribute to resilience strategies within the current crisis. They have devoted efforts to creating diverse strategies for various involvements, while also providing vital psychosocial support for survivors.*¹⁵

Gender-Sensitive Approach in Conflict Resolution Strategies

Rape has become a tool for power exertion and establishing control over individual or community. Perpetrators, specifically in an ethnic conflict or militias, use gender-based violence as a means of establishing dominance and removing half the pollution by demoralizing the enemy and instill fear.

Adopting a gender-sensitive approach in conflict resolution is necessary to address the atrocities endured by women as well as men, understand their unique needs, and formulate a response catering to every section of society, to redress their grievances and bring them to justice. Implementing a gender-sensitive approach in conflict resolution in DRC, South Sudan, Burundi, and Rwanda would have helped in improving the outcomes of the conflict and reduce the chances of further conflict.

● Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

In DRC, sexual violence has always been common and rampant during conflicts. There's an urgent need for a gender-sensitive approach to prevent gender-based violence and prepare a strategy for strict response against perpetrators. This would involve establishing safe spaces and support services for survivors, holding perpetrators accountable through legal mechanisms, and addressing the root causes of SGBV.

Inclusive participation: This will ensure the meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations and decision-making processes, especially at the time of deciding the fate of perpetrators of GBV. Women's organizations could help in formulating, executing, and advocating gender-sensitive policies and programs.

In 2018, more than 35% of women between the ages of 15-49 years reported being [sexually or physically abused](#) by an intimate partner. Further, almost 30% of girls under the age of 18 have been married or forced into a union. Finally, 70% of both women and men face food insecurity as well.¹⁶

Women for Women International

Since 2004 it has upheld more than 106,000 Congolese women. Second, it reports an increase in women's ability to pursue entrepreneurship. Finally, it shares that women are benefitting from improved diets and mental health access¹⁷

Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)

WPHF helps empower grassroots organizations to help women become more involved in political affairs. In the DRC, it works with Spotlight Initiative, another women's rights organization to fund 30 projects that 51 women's organizations in the DRC spearheaded.

● South Sudan:

In South Sudan, female members of the society have been excessively affected by conflict-related sexual violence and displacement. There was a need for a gender-sensitive approach that would have prioritized the protection and empowerment of women as well as children who faced sexual abuse. This could involve providing psychosocial support, economic opportunities, and access to education and healthcare for women and girls affected by conflict.

● Burundi

Gender-sensitive approach: In Burundi, ethnic tensions fueled conflict which demanded a gender-sensitive approach to recognize and highlight the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity in shaping individuals' experiences of conflict. This would have helped women in addressing the ¹⁸specific needs and vulnerabilities of women from different ethnic groups and ensured their participation in the decision-making process.

• Rwanda

In Rwanda, since sexual violence was used as a weapon of war during the genocide, a gender-sensitive approach would have helped in providing justice and accountability for survivors of sexual violence. This could involve building and supporting legal mechanisms to prosecute perpetrators of sexual violence and provide reparations for survivors.

Participation of women in post-genocide reconciliation and reconstruction efforts would have facilitated reconciliation and acceptance at the community level. Women's organizations could have played a crucial role in promoting social cohesion and addressing the root causes of conflict in Rwanda.

Here are other key components of a gender-sensitive approach in conflict resolution strategies:

Integration of the concept of gender equality and women's empowerment in conflict resolution will help in creating a comprehensive strategy for ensuring the complete resolution of issues in hand. This can involve measures to promote women's participation in the social sphere including healthcare services, leadership roles, education, and other economic activities. This will include building women empowerment programs and promotion of women's rights guaranteed by the constitution of the country.

Women's rights protection against gender-based violence, protecting women's rights over property and providing them safeguard against vulnerabilities such as trafficking and rape.

Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of gender-sensitive conflict resolution strategies and interventions. This involves collecting sex-disaggregated data, tracking progress on gender equality indicators, and conducting regular evaluations to identify gaps and areas for improvement. Foster partnerships and coordination among government agencies, civil society organizations, international actors, and local communities to implement gender-sensitive conflict resolution strategies collaboratively. This includes leveraging the expertise and resources of diverse stakeholders to address gender-based challenges comprehensively.

Peace Processes

Negotiations, mediations, and reconciliation Efforts: The peace process includes resolving and working on the root cause of the issue, bringing affected parties together, and bringing consensus between them. Reconciliation efforts often include addressing the grievances and rebuilding trust among communities and toward the government.

Introduction of development and welfare programs: The reconciliation process should address the hidden socio-economic and political grievances amongst the community members that are long-lasting and sustainable. Development programs focused on generating economic opportunities for all communities at equal levels and building a strong healthcare system, basic infrastructure, and education system can help in assisting in building a strong reconciliation process.

Institutional reforms: Institutional reforms are required to modernize and bring changes in the institutions and make them more flexible and adaptive to the needs of the citizens and address social issues including racial discrimination to provide space to the survivors and victims.

Power-sharing agreements: Power-sharing mechanisms should be established between the parties involved such as inclusive governments or consociation arrangements that help in delegating power to among all the ethnic groups, reducing competition and tensions over political representation between the communities.



Country	Power sharing details	Power sharing agreement
Sudan, 9 January 2005 (Naivasha)	Government, SPLM/A	<p><i>Political:</i> Executive: Transitional National Executive with 52% of seats held by NCP, 28% SPLM, 14% other northern political forces, 6% other southern political forces. Head of state remains in place; First Vice-President is SPLA leader Garang. Legislative: Transitional Assembly with 52% of seats held by NCP, 28% SPLM, 14% other northern political forces, 6% other southern political forces. More favourable terms for NCP and SPLM on the state level (70%).</p> <p><i>Territorial:</i> Southern Sudan becomes an autonomous region for 6 years; referendum about secession option to be held afterwards. Decentralization with significant devolution of powers to state and local level.</p> <p><i>Economy:</i> Sharing of oil incomes from oil produced in southern Sudan on a 50–50 basis.</p> <p><i>Military:</i> North and South with separate armies operating only in their territory. Joint force of 21,000 for three disputed territories.</p>
Burundi, 8 October 2003 (Pretoria)	Transitional government of Burundi and CNDD-FDD	<p><i>Political:</i> Executive: CNDD-FDD gets four ministries. Legislative: CNDD-FDD gets second Vice-President and deputy secretary-general of the bureau, plus 15 seats.</p> <p><i>Military:</i> Integrated general staff and officer corps, to be composed of 60% officers selected from the government army and 40% officers from the FDD. The allocation of</p>
		<p>command posts shall be on the basis of ethnic balance (50–50). (Similarly: police.)</p> <p><i>Territorial:</i> Provincial level: CNDD-FDD gets three governors' positions plus five advisers. Local level: CNDD-FDD gets 30 administrators. Economy: CNDD-FDD heads 20% of public enterprises</p>
DRC, 19 April 2002 (Sun City)	Government, MLC, RCD-ML, RCD-N, six different Mai-Mai groups, 19 political parties, 45 representatives of civil society	<p><i>Political:</i> In the transition phase Kabila remains President of the republic; Bemba (MLC) becomes Prime Minister; president of National Assembly goes to RDC; and president of the Senate to the unarmed opposition. Signatories to the agreement to present candidates for government positions. General dispositions to fill transitional National Assembly and Senate by signatories.</p>

Source: (Mehler, 2009)¹⁹

Along with delegation, decentralization is also crucial for empowering the communities affected to give them power and a sense of entitlement to help them solve their problems manage and distribute local resources judiciously, and help in reducing the grievances related to government rule and marginalization.

Constitutional Reforms: Constitutional rights enshrined in the rule book of the country, promote inclusive citizenship protect cultural diversity and rights of the minority, and establish a stable political system.

Regional Organizations and Their Role:

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): ECOWAS has played and has continued to play a crucial role in mediation, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and trust-building processes in West Africa. ECOWAS has, from time to time, facilitated peace processes and implemented numerous peacekeeping missions to resolve the conflicts in countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Mali.

ECOWAS's initiatives led to end of Liberian conflict. The organization oversaw 14 peace agreements in the conflict and several other on the Sierra Leone conflict. One of the major problems ECOWAS faced in these agreements was the continued multiplication of these conflicts and factions. One of the most important contributions of ECOWAS' in Liberia and Sierra Leone was dispatch of regional peacekeeping forces, also known as ECOWAS monitoring group (ECOMOG) in 1990. This was important as it was the first regional peacekeeping initiative after cold war.²⁰

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD): IGAD, like ECOWAS, works on similar lines but in the Horn of Africa, facilitating peace processes and negotiations between countries like South Sudan, Somalia, and Sudan. iGAD-led peace processes have led to peace agreements and have promoted stability in the region. Addresses and resolves a significant source of conflict in the region. It has also helped in resolving competition among countries for scarce resources such as water and grazing land.

Transitional justice mechanisms including truth and reconciliation commissions, war crime tribunals, and other local justice mechanisms play crucial roles in addressing grievances and ensuring accountability, fostering reconciliation, and bringing society above conflict or weak government.

Here's how each mechanism contributes to these objectives:

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission TRCs:

TRCs help in addressing and resolving a past conflict by giving victims and perpetrators a chance to share their experiences, truths, trauma, or any other feeling by talking about the violence they have gone through- including massacre, torture, rapes, violations, disappearance, kidnapping, witnessing a murder, etc. TRCs help validate the experiences of victims and provide a better understanding of the past.

Even though TRCs do not have prosecutorial powers typically, they can recommend, and suggest reforms at institutional, legal, and policy levels to prevent the government or ruling entity from committing the same mistakes again or address the root cause of the conflict and work on that to prevent any further abuse. Also, they can make the prosecution process easy by finding the actual culprit and bringing them to justice.

TRCs help foster reconciliation by promoting dialogue, acknowledging the victims and their suffering, and providing them with redressal and empathy to deal with the loss and further coming adversaries. By promoting acknowledgment of social wrongdoing, TRC upheld rebuilding trust and social cohesion.

Example: TRC formed in South Africa was meant to provide a national reconciliation and reshape South African's identity. The body comprised 17 commissioners (All south Africans) and 300 staff members. This TRC tool testimony from over 21000 victims and over witnesses, out to which 2000 appeared at public hearings. The commission also conducted sessions on religious, legal, business and labor institutions to address to take into account experiences of children, youth, women.²¹

2. Other justice mechanisms:

1. Domestic prosecutions: Domestic courts at state and district level play a major role in prosecuting perpetrators at domestic level and bring justice to the doorstep of people. Domestic prosecutions in the line of international justice mechanism by addressing crimes that fall outside the jurisdiction of international tribunals and catch lower level perpetrators.

2. Transnational justice mechanism includes local, regional, state, country and international level justice mechanisms to ensure justice at all level, maintain accountability, fostering trust over government machinery and ensure smooth post-conflict transitional societies. Legal accountability combined with truth telling, acknowledgement and social support helps to contribute to build more peaceful and just society.

African Union (AU) and its Shortcomings: An Assessment of Successes and Shortcomings

1. AU Frameworks and Mechanisms:

○ Peace and Security Council (PSC): The PSC serves as the principal organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. While it has been effective for some instances, the decision- making process of the organization is slow and decision making and implementation is affected by people, political motives and red tapes.

○ African Standby Force (ASF): ASF aims to increase AU's capacity for rapid deployment of peacekeeping missions. However, the operational capacity of the organization has been hindered by insufficient funding, logistical constraints and delays in fulfilling operational capability. Despite these shortcomings, ASF has played crucial role in peacekeeping missions including AMISOM in Somalia and others.

○ Panel of the Wise: It includes eminent African personalities and plays a key role in conflict prevention and mediation. While it brings experience and diplomatic skills of the experienced people, it lacks enforcing capabilities. However, it has been successful in

mediating conflicts in some instances, such as the Kenya's post-election crisis.

African Union has undertaken military interventions to help regulate conflicts in Burundi, Sudan, Somalia and the Comoros.

African mission to Burundi was AU's first mission where military forces were deployed. The mission was given green light by Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in February 2003. It was a combined mission including military parties from Ethiopia, Mozambique and South Africa as well as observers from Burkina Faso, Gabon, Mali, Togo and Tunisia. AMIB replaced the South African Protection Support Detachment (SAPSD) in Burundi. Since October 2000 South Africa had deployed some 700 troops in the country to promise the security of candidates, especially Hutu leaders, returning to Burundi to contribute in the peace process. This force was initially envisioned to be multi-national; however, planned contingents from Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal were never positioned, due to the unwarranted safety state in Burundi.²² Challenges to Sustainable Peace in Africa

1. Resurgence of Violence:

- Failed Peace Agreements: Despite efforts to sustain peace in the war-torn areas, many areas in Africa have witnessed resurgence in conflicts due to failure of peace process initiated and lack of insufficient implementation mechanisms and lack of inclusivity causes conflict to resurge.
- Relapse into Conflict: Conflicts in the region might relapse due to the emergence of new disturbing elements or unresolved grievances or the resurgence of armed groups in the region. This can relapse the conflict and disturb the brought peace,
- Cycles of Violence: Africa has always been indulged in a series of conflicts emerged due to various regions, weak governments, external interventions and ethnic tensions based on historical grievances. It becomes difficult to deal with conflict when factors involved are not ready to negotiate.

2. Structural Issues:

- Weak Governance: Weak governance, corruption, and lack of institutional capacity undermine efforts to build sustainable peace. Inadequate rule of law, accountability mechanisms, and political inclusivity can exacerbate grievances and fuel conflict.
- Socio-Economic Disparities: Continued socio-economic disparities including social discrimination, ethnic inequality, poverty, unemployment, and underlying tensions. Economic marginalization and discrimination can fuel grievances amongst community members and are capable of contributing to social unrest or aggravating the ongoing conflict.

3. External Factors:

- Influence of Neighboring States: Neighboring states also create trouble by supporting the local militias or proxy wars by training the local people to fight against the government or fragile governments by exacerbating conflicts. Regional power dynamics and relations with the neighbors can also impact the peace process and internal security.

Ex: Rwanda has been suspected of supporting rebel groups in the eastern DRC, particularly the Tutsi-led National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP). This fueled the Kivu conflict that displaced millions and resulted in numerous human rights abuses.

- Regional Organizations: Regional organizations such as African Union and ECOWAS also play a crucial role in conflict resolution in the region. They are also important as they know the regional setting and grassroots problems which help in underset the conflict in a much better way. The only constraint is resource allocation and political divisions among the countries which creates division in the organization.

- Global Powers: The involvement of great powers in Africa from time to time, for resources, strategic location or arms sales, has disturbed the peace of the continent. Strategic interests of other nations attract tussle between different power to have strong hold over the continent which results in regional conflicts, shadow government, interference in the domestic affairs of the countries, and selection of military backed or non-democratic leaders.

Countries like Djibouti, Somalia, and Eritrea have witnessed foreign military presence due to their strategic location.

DRC is a prime example. Its vast mineral resources have been a key driver of the ongoing conflict in the eastern part of the country, where neighboring Rwanda and Uganda have been suspected of backing rebel groups for control.

Role of Civil Society in Ethnic Conflict Dynamics and Resolution Processes

Civil society organizations play a major role in the dynamics of ethnic conflicts and its resolution. Africa, in particular, has witnessed many miracles because of civil society originations. Their roles range from grassroots mobilization and advocacy, helping peacebuilding and peacekeeping initiatives and foster dialogue between affected communities.

Civil society not only helps after the conflict but can also contribute affectively before the conflict and in the normal course of the society by helping in various functions.

1. Early Warning mechanism and prevention: Local civil society groups can be vigilant enough to predict and depict change in the political/ social wind of the country by closely monitoring the situation. They can also alert authorities and facilitate dialogue prior to the outbreak.²³

The African Union's Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) became operative in 2012, 10 years after its formation. The center of

the system was Conflict Management Centre. This was set up in 1993. The early warning system roles comprised information monitoring and collection. Second was conflict and cooperation analyses and lastly, preparation of response options for decision-makers. The first was carried out by the so-called Situation Room while the second and third were carried out by analysts. However, the CEWS was eliminated post 2021 reforms and a new department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security was created.²⁴

ECOWAS has also developed Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) which collects data, draft possible responses to ongoing or plausible responses and prepare for post-crisis transitions and rehabilitation. This system has been tested fully in Ghana and Liberia. NGOs and other civil society organization have also set up their EWS. For example: FEWER-Africa focused on the Ituri region in the DRC or the Early Warning and Early response project in Timor-Leste.²⁵

2. Advocacy and Awareness: NGOs and grassroots level organizations can help the government in spreading awareness campaigns-regarding human rights, disease, fake news, policy change and spread words of the government to people and vice versa to hold actual culprit accountable in case of conflict.

3. Dialogue and Reconciliation: Civil society acts as a "bridge builder". They initiate intergroup dialogue, facilitate mediation, and promote reconciliation efforts, which are essential at the grassroots level to rebuild trust.

Grassroots Movements:

a. Example - Burundi: In Burundi, civil society organizations such as the Forum for Strengthening Civil Society (FORSC) played a crucial role in promoting peace and reconciliation efforts during civil war. It helped in mobilizing communities and facilitate dialogue between different groups. It also promoted inclusive government and human rights. It serves as a platform for coordination between civil society actions and encourage political actors to strive for progress of citizens. In 2014, FORSC worked with opposition lawmakers to rout ruling party's attempt of changing the constitution to allow president to run for third term. This joint effort also blocked government's efforts to put this attempt through referendum.²⁶

b. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): NGOs like Search for Common Ground (SFCG) have worked in conflict-affected areas to promote peacebuilding and reconciliation. The group deploys a wide range of media and outreach tools to disseminate information, arrange dialogue and contribute to democracy by bridging gap between people and the government²⁷.

4. Role of the UN:

a. Successes and Failures: The UN has been involved in conflict resolution efforts in various African countries, including the four discussed. For example, UN peacekeeping missions like MONUSCO in the DRC have contributed to stabilizing conflict zones and protecting civilians by carrying out all the actions- joint or unilateral in strict accordance with international laws.

However, the MONUSCO has failed and has garnered opposition from the local people for its inefficiency and failure to stabilize the region for longer period. , a crackdown by Congolese troops on anti-UN demonstrations resulted in nearly 50 deaths²⁸. However, the UN has also faced challenges and criticism, including allegations of peacekeeper misconduct and limitations in mandate effectiveness. MONUSCO failed to assess the dynamics of the conflict and failed to address the human rights abuse by the government as well as local militias. In addition, accusations of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers also stained the mission's image and led to local protest against the mission.

Examples from the Ground (Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan/South Sudan, Liberia)

- Kenya (Post-Election Violence, 2007-2008): Civil society organizations actively promoted reconciliation, documented abuses, helped citizens to fight agisnt diaseses and pressured the government and international community to act. These actions were crucial for preventing further escalation.
- Rwanda (post-genocide): Grassroots initiatives focusing on forgiveness, trauma healing, and restorative justice have played a significant role in rebuilding communities despite the immense challenges. Women's associations have been vital in fostering reconciliation and supporting survivors.
- Sudan/South Sudan: Civil society is crucial in both countries. Groups monitor human rights abuses, advocate for peace agreements and civilian protection, while providing humanitarian aid amid ongoing conflicts and political instability.

Kenya	For fighting against diseases- Kenya Aids Consortium (KANCO), • Kenya Network of People with Aids (KENWA), • The Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS in Kenya (NEPHAK), and • National Aids Control Council (NACC)	Welfare association: • Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association, • East African Association, Taita Hills Association, and • Ukambin Members Association
Rwanda ²⁹	Worker's rights: Association Rwandaise pour la Promotion du Développement Intégré (ARDI) Central Union of Rwandan Workers (CESTRAR)	Human Rights: Le Conseil de Concertation des Organisations Libres au Rwanda (COSYLI) Ligue Rwandaise pour la Promotion et la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (LIPRODHOR)
		• Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (ARDHO) • Association des Volontaires de la Paix (AVP) • Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de la Personne et les Libertés Publiques • Kinyarwanda
Sudan/South Sudan	Sudanese Initiative for Constitution-Making (SICM)	Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC)
	Regional Centre for Development and Training of Civil Society (RCDCS)	

The Way Forward: Addressing These Challenges

African Countries should work upon strengthening their constitution which in long term will ensure accountability, stable form of government preferably democracy and accountable government that has delegated its power for effective working of the country.

Secondly, in addition to changing or reforming the type of government, the ones who elect the government should also be made aware of their rights, responsibility and duties as a citizen. For this, education system should be strong enough to inculcate all the changes, make youth and old equally aware about the current developments in the region and exercise their rights. They prerequisite to be authorized with the information, whether it be on such topics as security, rights, terrorism, intra-state conflicts, trade laws, unconstitutional changes of government, or laws that regulate economy, agriculture, mining, media, elections, and domestic relationships.

Another step can be electing an ethical leader with possibly no or minimal bias towards any particular community and has the capability of establishing an accountable government. Ethical leadership is a strong force to push the body politic to focus on ethical values that serve as a model for the rest of society.

Lastly, a holistic approach can be adopted to resolve any conflict and make structural changes to adjust ongoing conflict and give befitting policy response to it. Peacekeeping should move beyond ceasefire to prevent further flaring up or escalation in conflict.³⁰

The root cause of the issue must always be addressed as it includes historical grievances, economic inequalities, political exclusion of the particular community, or oppression of the rights of the people.

Community-level contribution should also be there in the peace process including grassroots initiatives - forgiveness, rebuilding trust, and recognition of the pain and suffering of the people to break the cycle.

Regional cooperation should be fostered including cross-border collaboration and addressing the security threats by combining forces of two or more countries, de-escalating tensions with neighboring countries can also pave the way for the sustainable peace process.

Achieving sustainable peace in Africa requires addressing the complex interplay of internal and external challenges. Efforts to build peace must focus on addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting good governance and inclusive development, strengthening regional cooperation and conflict resolution mechanisms, and addressing the influence of external actors. Only through comprehensive

and coordinated efforts can Africa overcome the challenges to sustainable peace and build a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Building Sustainable Peace in Africa

1. Addressing Root Causes: promoting inclusive and sustainable development in the region is essential for addressing the root cause of the issues. This means addressing the economic aspect of the problem by investing in the destroyed infrastructure, creating job opportunities at corporate, boosting agriculture, small businesses and bridge socio-economic disparities.

2. African countries, including Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia followed large scale “universal” subsidy program from the 1960’s up through the 1980’s. These plans were categorized by a government-controlled input (and output) marketing system, in which farmers were provided with agricultural inputs at controlled and subsidized prices, and often on heavily subsidized credit. The programs succeeded in raising input use by farmers and increasing agricultural productivity in many cases.³¹

3. Social inclusion and equal opportunities for all citizens without any discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, gender, socio, economic status can help in resolving the grievances and resolve the conflicts. Policies promoting education, healthcare and social welfare can help in promoting inclusivity.

4. The New Partnership for Africa’s development (NEPAD), also known as New African Initiatives. A group of five countries namely, South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria and Egypt, and an Implementation Committee of 15 Heads of State spearhead the NEPAD.

5. NEPAD seeks to support different African initiatives and use existing framework for action to prioritise action on two broad themes: *Peace, Security, democracy and political governance* and *Economic and corporate governance*.³²

6. Strengthening Institutions, Democratic Governance, and Accountable Leadership: it helps in building effective governance structures and responsible government to ensure transparency. It also helps in promoting stability and establish rule of law. It reduces chances of abuse of power, promote accountability and ensure responsive governance.

7. Civilian participation: ensuring democratic form of governance and citizen participation can help in giving voice to the people and build social trust. It also ensures that human rights are being upheld and political legitimacy is being maintained - supporting government institutions and peaceful political transitions. It also helps citizen to know about their rights and duties and oppose any steps of authoritarian government.

For example: South African constitution directly mentions about public participation, by giving responsibility to both houses of the national Parliament and all provincial legislature with the responsibility of facilitating public participation. In addition, section 118 (1) makes provision for public to have access to legislatures and be involved in processes. It also ensures that legislatures must conduct business in open domain to ensure transparency. Section 59 (2) offers that legislatures may not exclude the public and media “unless it is reasonable and justifiable to do so in an open and democratic society”³³

International community too should keep in mind that conflicts originating in the region might have history which needs to be resolved to establish strong and stable government. Local ownership of the government and all higherposition is necessary to ensure foreign intervention is not capturing the government. Instead of going for top-down solution, bottom-up solutions, which include citizen participation or civil society organizations working as a bridge between people and the government, are handier as they include suggestions and views of the local community.

Building sustainable peace in Africa requires comprehensive and coordinated efforts to address root causes of conflict, strengthen institutions and governance, and promote regional cooperation and international support. By investing in inclusive development, promoting democratic governance, and fostering accountable leadership, Africa can overcome the challenges to peace and build a more stable, prosperous, and peaceful future for its people.

CONCLUSION –

Weaving a Tapestry of Peace in Africa

The pursuit of lasting peace in Africa remains a complex and ongoing struggle. The scars of ethnic violence run deep, and the path towards reconciliation is fraught with challenges. This exploration has delved into the intricate workings of the African Union (AU) and international interventions, highlighting their strengths, limitations, and the need for continued improvement. We have also examined the formidable obstacles that threaten sustainable peace, including the resurgence of violence, weak governance, and external interference.

Despite these daunting challenges, there are reasons for hope. The AU's commitment to conflict resolution and its growing capacity offer a foundation for regional peacebuilding. International collaboration, when guided by a shared vision of justice and stability, can provide crucial support and resources. Most importantly, a growing recognition of the need to address the root causes of conflict, such as poverty, inequality, and historical injustices, paves the way for more sustainable solutions.

Building peace is not a quick fix; it requires sustained effort, unwavering commitment, and a willingness to confront difficult truths. By empowering local communities, fostering dialogue and reconciliation, and promoting

inclusive development, Africa can move beyond the cycle of violence and build a future where diversity is celebrated, not weaponized. Only then can the continent truly flourish and reach its full potential.

This journey towards peace is not merely a responsibility for African nations, but a global endeavour. We, as a global community, have a shared stake in ensuring a more peaceful and prosperous Africa. Through collaboration, resource sharing, and a commitment to good governance, we can all play a role in weaving a tapestry of peace across the continent. Let us move forward, guided by the lessons learned, the hope for a brighter future, and the unwavering belief that lasting peace in Africa is not a dream, but a possibility waiting to be realized.

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